

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

Horizon

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

SOME NOTES ON THE BRITISH CHARACTER
BY GEOFFREY GORER

LUIGI DALLAPICCOLA BY ROMAN VLAD

THE BOY WHO WROTE 'NO' BY JAMES LORD

FRANCIS BACON BY ROBERT MELVILLE

STUDIES IN GENIUS: X—THE MARQUIS DE SADE
BY MAURICE BLANCHOT

POEMS BY C. DAY LEWIS AND OCTAVIO PAZ

REVIEW BY MAURICE RICHARDSON

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HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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COMMENT

WE have called this number of HORIZON a 'special' number because it is longer than usual, but as it is in no other way out of the ordinary it might be interesting to take it to pieces and analyse them so as to explain to the reader for once exactly how a number comes to be put together. At first we hoped to have a double number, in order to print every manuscript which we had accepted, but the printers were unable to comply. Let us examine what remains. The poem by Cecil Day Lewis is the second part of a long one which has recently been broadcast. The first part has appeared in *The Listener*. The poem attempts to translate into a casual easy-seeming free-flowing verse narrative a particularly unpoetical experience, the flight from London to Rome. In our view the poem is a triumphant success; the whole unreal paraphernalia of flight becomes absorbed into the medium and even that unreality of the spirit which makes commercial flying so ignominious, that absence of any feeling except genteel apprehension quickening sometimes into panic or euphoria, is poetically conveyed. Ten years ago we printed Cecil Day Lewis's *Fourth Georgic*, and with his friend Auden, whose poems appeared in the first and last but one number, he represents the continuity of the magazine. Four other favourite poets were personally asked for a contribution to this number; two of these did not reply, one was under contract to give all his poetry to an American humorous journal, the fourth had just taken a vow to publish no more poetry for ten years, so we register this one success out of five as fairly typical of the present-day problem of obtaining material. There is also the 'poetry drawer', which fills up at the rate of about eighty poems a week and is emptied by the editor, sometimes assisted by a visiting poet who has dropped in for tea. Here are poets whose names and typewriters are as well known to us after years of rejecting as if they were household words: one uses green paper, another mauve ink, another, we notice, has gone to the country, a Glasgow bard moved to town. They are an extraordinarily English phenomenon, these hundreds of amateur poets; in the end one rejects them by texture, smell, paperweave—heartlessly—because within a month they all will be back. Occasionally something good or almost good comes into the drawer, but we have noticed that poems which we publish in this way are seldom followed up.

The poems by Octavio Paz, who lives in Mexico City, were handed to Peter Watson by Henri Hell in Paris and come to us by those winged seed-ways by which many of our new talents in foreign countries have reached us. We have published all too little in Spanish and it is a pleasure to air these fragments of delicate loneliness.

For the main article we had to choose between Blanchot's Sade and a brilliant essay on Proust by Mlle. Claude-Edmonde Magny. Blanchot's criticism

is known to our readers through his *Constant* (No. 116); Mlle. Magny's is not. But whereas we have had one article on Proust and many other references (there are three new books out on him at present) we have never had anything on Sade who is still comparatively unknown in England and the essay by Blanchot is outstanding. So with regretful hesitation (and perhaps because it is less fatiguing to translate from the print than crabbed long-hand) we made our choice. It must be remembered that Blanchot's article appeared in *Les Temps Modernes* after a wave of new interest and new approaches to Sade while here we have had no book on him since Geoffrey Gorer's. Last of more than a hundred appreciations of living painters and sculptors, the article on Francis Bacon deals with the outstanding exhibition of the month, while that on the music of Dallapiccola adds a bright new name to the atonal musicians, Schoenberg, Berg and Webern on whom we have published articles by René Leibowitz. The short story is one of the first works to be printed by a young American writer and continues the line of honourable craftsmen with strong feelings like Truman Capote, Paul Bowles, Eudora Welty, Paul Goodman and Donald Windham whom we have helped to disseminate in this country and their own. The notes on English character bring into the fold another writer whose work we would have been glad to present before.

At this point a superficial analysis could cease: music, painting, literature, poetry, fiction and the general article: the mixture is familiar to our readers—and they might also notice that without any self-conscious polyglot attitude a Mexican, an Italian, a Rumanian, an American and a Frenchman share the honours with three English writers. But let us probe the contents further. The early issues of HORIZON were tentative and eclectic; they were apt to combine the better Georgian writers with the official school of the Thirties. The war isolated the Georgians and scattered the Thirties group. We then moved on to a more definite war footing, fulfilling a double purpose—that of conserving the essential features of the heritage of Western humanism in time of danger and that of bringing out the young war writers and the particular kind of serious reporting that grew up round the war. Alun Lewis, William Sansom, Tom Harrisson, Maclaren Ross, Arturo Barea, were newcomers of this period, and poets like W. R. Rogers and Laurie Lee. Towards the end of the war the impact of the clandestine literature of the French Resistance movement tended almost to swamp us as did our efforts to bring the conclusions of modern psychology into line with the creative arts. From being a kind of exchange where the writer in uniform sent in his records of new experience to receive in return nostalgic fragments of the 'douceur de vivre' or new estimates of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, we became a display window for Sartre and Camus and the French writers so ably interpreted for us by John Russell, Philip Toynbee and other young critics. Here we were in peril of becoming an advertisement for international fashions of the mind. We began to withdraw into the insolent

tower of our anarcho-perfectionism, only to settle down with a new list towards America, and our double American number (October 1947) was probably the solidest of all the editorial attempts to convey a present atmosphere with truthful alertness. But we have always believed that the real vocation of this magazine was to feel its way to what is, in the best sense of the word, contemporary, to print what many years hence will be recognized as alive and original and to draw away from the nostalgic or inflated, to abandon the role of custodian for that of innovating interpreter, and we feel that in the last four years we have at last begun to understand what the Forties (as opposed to the Thirties or Twenties) are really about. The 'Inscrutable Forties' we had first called them, and the results of our scrutiny are not pleasant. Let us take some examples from this number.

Thus 'The Boy Who Wrote NO' writes his 'No' explicitly against banking, commerce, the law, the church and the family, he is a mute and lonely rebel, and his punishment for his five No's is the worst society can devise. But these five No's set a cord vibrating. This year another HORIZON author, Paul Bowles, produced a first and first-rate novel, *The Sheltering Sky*¹, in which a dying man who exemplifies the helplessness and lucidity of our age, packs all his delirious wisdom into the same brief cry: '*No, no, no, no, no,*' he said. *It was all he had the strength to say. But even if he had been able to say more, still he would have said only: 'No, no, no, no.'* Bowles's characters, three hard-drinking, haunted expatriates lost against a Saharan background, carry the loneliness and isolation of human beings, even those whose ties are closest, a stage further than any other contemporary, but always with some wild and bracing enchantment in their discovery. And the loudest and most interminable 'No' in literature—No to God, No to Nature, No to Man—is perhaps that which the Marquis de Sade boomed from his prisons. The rules which he caused the Duc de Blangis to lay down for his women held a prophetic significance: '*Il sera peu d'excès sans doute où nous ne nous portions; qu'aucun ne vous répugne, prêtez-vous sans sourciller, et opposez à tout la patience, la soumission et le courage. Si malheureusement quelqu'une d'entre vous succombe à l'intempérie de nos passions qu'elle prenne bravement son parti; nous ne sommes pas dans le monde pour toujours exister, et ce qui peut arriver de plus heureux à une femme c'est de mourir jeune.*'

This study in misunderstood genius leads us easily on to Bacon's horror-fretted canvases and to Dallapiccola's Songs for Prisoners, to the criticism made of him 'a few, a very few musicians, have an intense awareness, heightened by their intellect, of the tragedy within our time—of the religious struggle which is carried on to the last drop of blood—between the spiritual ideal of liberty and the tyrannous brutality of matter and its inexorable determinism'.

¹John Lehmann. 10s. 6d.

One can perceive the inner trend of the Forties as maintaining this desperate struggle of the modern movement, between man, betrayed by science, bereft of religion, deserted by the pleasant imaginings of humanism against the blind fate of which he is now so expertly conscious that if we were to close this last Comment with the suggestion that every one who now is reading it may in ten years' time, or even five, look back to this moment as the happiest in their lives, there would be few who would gainsay us. 'Nothing dreadful is ever done with, no bad thing gets any better; you can't be too serious.' This is the message of the Forties from which, alas, there seems no escape, for it is closing time in the gardens of the West and from now on an artist will be judged only by the resonance of his solitude or the quality of his despair.

★ ★ ★

During 1950 we shall publish a fat anthology, *The Best of HORIZON*. We also draw the attention of our readers to our latest publication, *Baudelaire* by Jean-Paul Sartre, admirably translated by Martin Turnell (10s. 6d.). The Index to 1949 in this number completes the Index for Nos. 1-108 of which copies are still available at 53, Bedford Square, W.C.1, price 2s. 6d. Some back numbers can also be supplied. All books published by HORIZON are being distributed as usual through Messrs. Chatto & Windus.

★ ★ ★

To all our critical and devoted readers, our talented contributors, our patient printers; to our pastor-mentor, Oliver Simon, ex-Editor Stephen Spender, our friend Gertrude Temkin; to our discerning advertisers and distributors; to Frances Steloff of the Gotham Book Mart; to our fraternal contemporary *Partisan Review*; to the many loyal and generous subscribers all over the world to whom we trust we are not dead but sleeping, we wish an enduring Christmas, a fortunate 1950, hail and farewell!

★ ★ ★

Notice to Collectors: A full and perfect set of HORIZON should include numbers 1-121, the separate Index and the special number of 1945 'La Littérature anglaise pendant la guerre'. The magazine was founded in the summer of 1939 with Peter Watson as proprietor and Art Editor, Cyril Connolly and Stephen Spender (to 1941) as Editors. There were two issues of the first number; the first issue contains several incorrect French accents. No. 98 'The Loved One' and No. 110 'The Oasis' are complete first editions. Nos. 1-4 were printed by H. F. & G. Witherby & Co., the remainder by The Curwen Press.

FLIGHT TO ITALY¹

The moment

Bank and turn, bank and turn,
Air-treading bull, my silver Alitalia!
Bank and turn, while the earth below
Swings like a dial on the wing-tip's axis,
Whirls and checks like a wheel of chance!
Now keep your course! On azure currents
Let the wings lift and sidle drowsily—
A halcyon rocked by the ghost of the gale.

¹From work in progress, *An Italian Visit*.

To watchers in Kent you appear as a quicksilver
Bead skimming down the tilted sky;
To the mild-eyed aircrew, an everyday office:
To us, immured in motion, you mean
A warm womb pendant between two worlds.

O trance prenatal and angelic transport!
Like embryos curled in this aluminium belly—
Food and oxygen gratis—again
We taste the pure freedom of the purely submissive,
The passive dominion of the wholly dependent.
Through heaven's transparent mysteries we travel
With a humdrum of engines, the mother's heartbeat:
And our foreshadowed selves begin to take shape, to be
Dimly adapted to their destination.
What migrant fancies this journeying generates!—
Almost we imagine a metempsychosis.

Over the Channel now, beneath the enchanting
Inane babble of a baby-blue sky,
We soar through cloudland, at the heights of nonsense.
From a distance they might be sifted-sugar-drifts,
Meringues, iced cakes, confections of whipped cream
Lavishly piled for some Olympian party—
A child's idea of heaven. Now radiant
All around the airscrew's boring penumbra
The clouds redouble, as nearer we climb,
Their toppling fantasy. We skirt the fringe of icebergs,
Dive under eiderdowns, disport with snowmen
On fields of melting snow dinted by the wind's feet,
Gleefully brush past atom-bomb cauliflowers,
Frozen fuffs of spray from naval gunfire.

Wool-gathering we fly through a world of make-believe.
We *are* the aircraft, the humming-bird hawk moth
Hovering and sipping at each cloud corolla;
But also ourselves, to whom these white follies are
Valid as symbols for a tonic reverie
Or as symptoms of febrile flight from the real.
Let us keep, while we can, the holiday illusion,
The heart's altimeter dancing bliss-high,
Forgetting gravity, regardless of earth

Out of sight, out of mind, like a menacing letter
Left at home in a drawer—let the next-of-kin acknowledge it.

The cloud-floor is fissured suddenly. Clairvoyance
It seems, not sight, when the solid air frays and parts
Unveiling, like some rendezvous remote in a crystal,
Bright, infinitesimal, a fragment of France.
We scan the naked earth as it were through a skylight.
Down there, what life-size encounters, what industrious
Movement and vocations manifold go forward!
But to us, irresponsible, above the battle,
Villages and countryside reveal no more life than
A civilization asleep beneath a glacier,
Toy bricks abandoned on a plain of linoleum.

After a hard winter, on the first warm day
The invalid venturing out into the rock-garden,
Pale as a shaft of December sunshine, pauses
All at sea among the aubretia, the alyssum
And arabis—halts and moves on how warily,
As if to take soundings where the blossom foams and
tumbles:

But what he does sound is the depth of his own weakness
At last, as never when pain-storms lashed him.
So we, convalescent from routine's long fever,
Plummeting our gaze down to river and plain,
Question if indeed that dazzling world beneath us
Be truth or delirium; and finding still so tentative
The answer, can gauge how nearly we were ghosts,
How far we must travel yet to flesh and blood.

But now the engines have quickened their beat
And the fuselage pulsates, panting like a fugitive.
Below us—oh, look at it!—earth has become
Sky, a thunderscape curdling to indigo,
Veined with valleys of green fork-lightning.
The atrocious Alps are upon us. Their ambush—
A primaeval huddle, then a bristling and heaving of
Brutal boulder-shapes, an uprush of Calibans—
Unmasks its white-fanged malice to maul us.
The cabin grows colder. Keep height, my angel!

Where we are, all but terra firma is safe.

Recall how flyers from a raid returning
Lightened of one death, were elected for another:
Their homing thoughts too far ahead, a mountain
Stepped from the mist and slapped them down.
We, though trivial the hazard, retract
Our trailing dreams until we have cleared these ranges.
Exalted, numinous, aloof no doubt
To the land-locked vision, for us they invoke
A mood more intimate, a momentary flutter and
Draught of danger—death's fan coquettishly
Tapping the cheek ere she turn to dance elsewhere.
Our mien is the bolder for this mild flirtation,
Our eyes the brighter, since every brush with her
Gives flesh a souvenir, a feel of resurrection.

Those peaks o'erpassed, we glissade at last to
A gentian pasture, the Genoan sea.
Look south, sky-goers! In flying colours
A map's unrolled there—the Italy
Your schooldays scanned once: the hills are sand-blond,
A pale green stands for the littoral plain:
The sea's bedizened with opening islands
Like iris eyes on a peacock's fan.
How slowly dawns on the drowsy newborn
Whose world's unworn yet—a firelit dress,
An ego's glamorous shell, a womb of rumours—
The first faint glimmering of otherness!
But half awake, we could take this country
For some vague drift from prenatal dreams:
Those hills and headlands, like sleep's projections
Or recollections, mere symbol seem.

Then hurtling southward along shores of myrtle,
Silverly circle the last lap,
My bull-headed moth! This land is nothing
But a mythical name on an outline map
For us, till we've scaled it to our will's dimensions,
Filled in each wayward, imperious route,
Shaded it in with delays and chagrins,
Traced our selves over it, foot by foot.

Now tighter we circle, as if the vertical
Air is a whirlpool drawing us down;
And the airfield, a candle-bright pinpoint, invites us
To dance ere alighting . . . Hurry! We burn
For Rome so near us, for the phoenix moment
When we have thrown off this traveller's trance,
And mother-naked and ageless-ancient
Wake in her warm nest of renaissance.

THREE POEMS BY OCTAVIO PAZ

POET'S EPITAPH

He sang until his death
singing to close his eyes
to his true life, his real life of lies;
and to remember till he died
how it had lied, his unreal life of truth.

EPITAFIO PARA UN POETA

Quiso cantar, cantar
para olvidar
su vida verdadera de mentiras
y recordar
su mentirosa vida de verdades.

TWO BODIES

Two bodies face to face
are at times two waves
and night is an ocean.

Two bodies face to face
are at times two stones
and night is a desert.

Two bodies face to face
are at times two roots
and night is the earth.

HORIZON

Two bodies face to face
are at times two knives
and night strikes sparks.

Two bodies face to face
are two stars falling down
in an empty sky.

DOS CUERPOS

Dos cuerpos frente a frente
son a veces dos olas
y la noche es océano.

Dos cuerpos frente a frente
son a veces dos piedras
y la noche desierto.

Dos cuerpos frente a frente
son a veces raíces
en la noche enlazadas.

Dos cuerpos frente a frente
son a veces navajas
y la noche relámpago.

Dos cuerpos frente a frente
son dos astros que caen
en un cielo vacío.

THE STREET

Here is a long and silent street.
I walk in blackness and I stumble and fall
and rise, and I walk, my blind feet
trampling the silent stones and the dry leaves.
Someone behind me also tramples, stones, leaves:
if I slow down, he slows;
if I run, he runs. I turn: nobody,
Everything dark and doorless,
only my steps aware of me,
turning and turning among these corners

which lead forever to the street
 where nobody waits for, nobody follows me,
 where I pursue a man who stumbles
 and rises and says when he sees me: nobody.

LA CALLE

Es una calle larga y silenciosa.
 Ando en tienieblas y tropiezo y caigo
 y me levanto y piso con pies ciegos
 las piedras mudas y las hojas secas
 y alguien detrás de mí también las pisa:
 si me detengo, se detiene,
 si corro, corre. Vuelvo el rostro: nadie.
 Todo está oscuro y sin salida,
 sólo mis pasos me acompañan
 y doy vueltas y vueltas en esquinas
 que dan siempre a la calle
 donde nadie me espera ni me sigue,
 donde yo sigo a un hombre que tropieza
 y se levanta y dice al verme: nadie.

[*Translated by* MURIEL RUKEYSER]

GEOFFREY GORER

SOME NOTES ON THE BRITISH CHARACTER

IN the notes which follow I have tried to outline a few of the problems which I think a dynamic analysis of the English character ought to be able to answer. I cannot make such an analysis; it demands a degree of detachment which I can only achieve spasmodically and for very short periods; although intellectually I realize how statistically deviant I am (by the criteria of education and income alone I fall into less-than-one-per-cent categories) emotionally I find it almost impossible not to consider myself

'typical' in many of my experiences and responses; I tend to regard my own introspections and unrationalized behaviour as evidence to an extent which I realize is quite unwarranted.

When thinking about the English, I really refer only to the southern English. I have made only very brief visits myself to the north of England; although quite a number of my friends and acquaintances come from the north, they have almost all had southern education. Nearly all the writers I use or could use as evidence are southern writers; and foreign travellers seldom spend much time north of the Trent. Superficially, there would appear to be very considerable differences in typical character between the bulk of the population of northern and southern England; one of the problems which would confront an anthropological student would be to determine how basic these differences are, whether from the viewpoint of typical character and customs England should be considered as one or two (or more) cultures, and if more than one, where are the dividing lines. Wales and Scotland are without question different cultures; but whether they should be regarded as wholes, or divided into two or more sub-cultures is also quite unclear.

It seems probable that for the whole of the British Isles the character and attitudes of the top five per cent (measured in years of education and/or income) have been profoundly modified by the dominant culture of southern England; but this would not seem to apply in anything like such a marked degree, despite the increasing influence of centralized mass-communications and standardized education, to the great bulk of the population which continues to manifest regional differences in accent, vocabulary, diet and other customs.

I. THE DIMINISHING OF OVERT AGGRESSION

If we can judge by the literary evidence and the accounts of travellers, the English in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—to go back no earlier—were remarkably free in the physical expression of aggression, nor did they in any way condemn the enjoyment of aggression, either as performance or spectacle. Kastrill, 'the angry boy' in *The Alchemist*, would appear to be a figure of fun only because of his naïvety and exaggeration, because he wanted to learn how to quarrel, instead of being 'naturally' quarrelsome. A proper man was mettlesome, and he

showed his mettle by the readiness with which he responded to, or provoked, a fight. Men walked around armed, if not with swords, with cudgels and life-preservers; one could not, it would seem, go on foot through the streets of London without being prepared to fight.

I know of no society in the world which had such persistently cruel and violent spectacles as the Londoners of Shakespeare's period: the bull-baiting, the bear-baiting, the cock-fighting, and the endless duels and battles, the scenes of cruelty, torture and madness which flocked so thick on one another on the English stage. The Grand Guignol has produced nothing more gratuitously savage than some of the scenes in gentle Shakespeare, from *Titus Andronicus* to the blinding of Gloucester on the stage ('Out, vile jelly!') in *King Lear*. Compared with most of his contemporaries, Shakespeare was gentle. Of the theatre I know of, only the Burmese drama of the late nineteenth century approaches the Elizabethan in its search for horror.

Read as documents, the great novels of the eighteenth century such as *Tom Jones* or *Roderick Random* portray a very great amount of incidental aggression—cudgel fights, fist fights and so on—which is not so much necessary to the plot or the development of character as agreeable illustrations of everyday events. The violence of public life continues, even perhaps enhanced, with the growing industry of highwaymen and the kin of Jonathan Wild. But such aggressive behaviour was not merely, nor even, it would appear, chiefly criminal or against criminals. Casanova, for example, tells of a theatrical performance at Drury Lane, when 'for some reason or other which I forget the play which had been advertised could not be given. The public started protesting. The great actor Garrick, who was buried twenty years later in Westminster Abbey, tried to calm the audience, but uselessly; he was obliged to withdraw. Some angry people shouted "*Sauve qui peut*", and then the king and queen and the rest hurriedly left the theatre; an hour later the whole theatre was wrecked except the walls which withstood the anger of the people who did all this destruction for the sole pleasure of exercising their power. . . . A fortnight later, when the theatre had been repaired, Garrick came before the curtain to beg the public's indulgence. A voice from the pit cried "On your knees"; and this cry was taken up by a thousand voices; and Garrick . . . was forced to kneel and ask the public's pardon in

this humiliating position. Then there was loud applause and all was over. This is what the English people are like, especially the Londoners; they revile (*bafouent*) the king, the queen, the princes when they appear in public; consequently they seldom do so except on ceremonial occasions, when there are hundreds of constables to keep order.¹

These public manifestations of uninhibited aggression, accompanied apparently by great pride and self-respect, seem to disappear in the course of the nineteenth century. I think a counting of the incidents of physical combat and of amusement at the physical misfortunes of others in Dickens's novels would show a quite steady and marked decline through the thirty odd years of his literary production, from 1836 to 1870; and this would seem to be the period when overt aggression without feelings of guilt practically disappeared from English middle- and upper-class life.

There is some evidence to suggest that in the second half of the nineteenth century this pleasure in aggression, suppressed in normal social life, took on a pathological aspect. The mid-Victorian period, roughly 1860-80, witnessed the publication of a very great deal of pornography,² probably a larger quantity for the period than any other country has witnessed. These pornographic novels appear to be overwhelmingly sado-masochistic, with very great emphasis on flagellation. The chief fantasy-figure appears to be the sadistic woman, and the title of one of the most famous of these books, *Under Petticoat Government* (rumour has ascribed the authorship of this book to a number of the most austere figures in public life) might serve for nearly all of them. One cannot, of course, know to what extent these fantasies corresponded with actual behaviour; but even if they were exclusively fantasies, their wide dissemination would be evidence of the turning of aggression against the self. There is, besides, the well-documented case of Swinburne and the facilities that he seems to have found so easily; and it would seem to be from this period that the elegant periphrases '*le vice anglais*' and '*l'éducation anglaise*' achieved fairly widespread dissemination.

The overt aggression of the lower classes lasted considerably longer. Besides such political activities as the Chartists, Tolpuddle,

¹ *Mémoires de Casanova* (Paris, Garnier Frères n.d. Vol. VI, p. 350).

² See 'Pisanus Fraxi's' *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* and the other two volumes of his *catalogue raisonné*.

or the great dock strike, there was the mockery and (on occasion) physical aggression against the more fortunate classes which Dickens symbolized in Trabb's boy. Up to the beginning of this century, probably up to 1914, well-dressed adults risked mockery, well-dressed children and adolescents assaults from the ill-clad. Fights between 'town' and 'gown' would appear to have been frequent in appropriate localities.

Together with some of my contemporaries (George Orwell has described it well) I can just remember the jeering of the 'rude boys', and the fear, not I think altogether groundless, that women felt for going unaccompanied at night, or on lonely roads.

As far as I can see, this aggression has practically disappeared from English public life. I do not remember when I last saw a spontaneous fight in public (they are still common enough in American bars) or witnessed persistent or organized mockery. The contemporary English would appear to have as unaggressive a public life as any recorded people.

This brings me to the first of the problems that I think a study of the English character ought to be able to answer: by what means have the expression of and pleasure in aggression been so minimized in public life, and what are the results of this?

I have consistently stressed public life, because that is the only area where evidence from the past is at all adequate. Studies, such as those of Adam Curle on returned prisoners-of-war,¹ suggest that today there is a very great deal of quarrelling in marital and family relationships among the working class. If this should prove to be generally true (Mr. Curle's study was confined to one small area), there is the theoretical possibility that the aggression has not diminished so much as it has changed object, that instead of being directed at members of other classes, as such, it is now focused on the other members of the family. But I know of no comparable evidence concerning working-class family life in the past. Dickens has several sketches of working families (e.g. the Gargeries, or the brickmakers in *Bleak House*, or the Hexham family) with a good deal of nagging and brutality, usually only from one member of the family; but I do not feel that he wished these working-class families to be regarded as 'typical' in the way that he wished Sir Leicester Dedlock or Mr. Dombey to be regarded as 'typical'.

¹ *Human Relations*, Vol. I, and private communications.

II. SHYNESS—FEAR OF STRANGERS

One of the most interesting pieces of social research which have been undertaken in England in the last twenty years is the Peckham Health Centre. This Centre was set up for medical reasons—to study the health, rather than the sickness of the community—in one of the cheaper residential suburbs of London; membership was confined to families living in a limited area around the Centre; on the payment of a very small weekly subscription the considerable recreational and athletic facilities of the Centre were made available to any families who so desired within the delimited area, provided each member submitted to regular (and free) medical examinations. The creators of the experiment have described their medical findings in a series of publications.

The members of the Centre lived in a single delimited area—considerably less than a mile square—and very few were, at the time of joining, newcomers to the area; and yet it was only the exceptional family that knew any other family in the neighbourhood before they met as fellow-members of the Centre; most of the families, it developed, had no acquaintances at all in the suburb where they lived; few had friends (as opposed to blood relatives) in the whole London area.

At the Centre people got to know their neighbours; the family constellations were broken up as individuals pursued various hobbies, games, athletics or other occupations according to taste or aptitude. The members improved dramatically in cheerfulness and physical and psychological health. Despite this, families were slow in joining; although the cost was very little and the advantages great less than half of the families living in the area of potential membership joined at any one period.

There is naturally no information about the families who did not join, though by ordinary sociological criteria they do not seem to differ from the members; what I wish to draw attention to is the very great loneliness and friendlessness of the families who did become members, and their reports of the hesitations and fears which had kept them so long from applying for membership.

Introspectively, these lonely people referred to their 'shyness', their 'wanting to keep themselves to themselves', and many similar phrases. Objectively I think they can be said to manifest

excessive (and irrational) fear of strangers. These fears are probably almost entirely un verbalized, but I suspect that they have two components: fear of others' contempt and rejection, as inadequately attractive, entertaining, educated, well-mannered and so on, and fear of corruption and contamination from others, either by being led into disapproved-of indulgences or extravagances (or having members of one's family so corrupted) or by having one's social status lowered by association with people 'who don't know how to behave'.

It is my suggestion that this irrational fear of strangers is a characteristic shared by a majority of the English, though it probably comparatively seldom attains such quasi-pathological development as occurred in Peckham. It would seem that for most of the population there is a group who are considered as not being strangers, and therefore safe: the neighbours in the country, and possibly also the slums, people who have been to the same, or similar, schools, belong to the same voluntary associations (athletic or social clubs), members of the same social sub-class in the upper-middle and upper classes. Within these restricted groups anxiety is very low; there is not even fear of being considered 'a bore' by inactivity or nearly complete silence. This circle of safety is, however, in most cases fairly restricted; and social situations which involve people from two or more circles tend to be felt by many participants as 'uncomfortable', 'boring', 'stiff', or any of the other phrases which denote shyness and fear of strangers.

This shyness is least manifested by members of the upper classes, as a general rule; apart from such self-confidence as they may derive from their acknowledged social status, they have most of them had prolonged training in giving the appearance of ease (absence of anxiety) and in maintaining an even flow of conversation which will obviate 'awkward silences'. It is not unknown for such behaviour to cover considerable nervousness.

This shyness would appear to have had most important political implications. In those portions of Asia and Africa which are or were governed by England many of the native *élites* acquired an education and (to a considerable extent) a character structure which entitled them to be considered on a formal level as the equals of the resident English governing class. In many cases they were granted formal equality, but practically never social equality, typified in most areas by membership of the local

social clubs. This exclusion appears to have distressed and humiliated the native *élites* out of all proportion to a rational assessment of the amenities foregone; in many cases (it would appear) it was such humiliations which drove intellectuals into political activities aimed at ousting the English who had so humiliated them.

This exclusion was generally interpreted as 'race prejudice', but, I think, incorrectly; or, if correctly, only to the extent that 'race' made the strangeness of the stranger more evident. I know of a number of individuals who sincerely liked the people among whom they were stationed, who had many friends whom they entertained and whom they were entertained by, and who realized intellectually the political implications of the English-only clubs; but even they mostly justified the exclusion on the grounds that people 'naturally' wanted to keep the clubs as a place where they could relax, where they wouldn't be tired or bored. It could be said, without too much exaggeration, that the fear of strangers lost England its Asiatic empire.

I know of little evidence from literature or personal documents which can determine how long this shyness has been characteristic of the English, nor how widespread it was in former times. The upper classes, touring in Europe, had a reputation for reserve, for *morgue* or *phlegme*, but this may well have been disdain rather than shyness. Jane Austen, writing about the upper-middle and lower-upper classes at the turn of the nineteenth century considered shyness to be a sign of inferior breeding (Sir William Lucas and his daughter Maria, for example); but she considered excessive unreserve in the same light; Mrs. Elton is damned off possessing 'ease, but not elegance'. Miss Austen's better-born or richer characters tend to exhibit *phlegme*, 'sitting in silence for several minutes', or even picking up a newspaper, when paying morning calls. In Dickens, shyness is a trait of youthfulness and almost of imbecility (see, for example, Toots or Miss Podsnap); but Dickens must have been one of the last Englishmen to feel or sympathize with shyness. In the semi-autobiographical novels of this century shyness is often one of the sensitivities from which the misunderstood hero suffers; but this is probably only evidence concerning the type of person who writes this type of novel.

It is, of course, understandable that literature tells us so little about the fear of strangers, for this trait is manifested by the

inhibition of conversation or action. Its extent could only be adequately depicted by sociometric studies.

If this characteristic is as general today as scattered evidence would suggest, how is it induced and maintained? This is a second problem for my imagined student of the English character.

III. KEEPING SECRETS

A third feature of English character which my imaginary anthropologist would need to explain is the great ability of a large portion of Englishmen to keep secrets, and the way in which most of the rest of the population are willing for the secrets to be kept without prying. This propensity is difficult to document, for the good reason that English people do not boast of knowing secrets. During the war it was noteworthy that men and women in all walks of life could announce that they were engaged in 'hush-hush' jobs without exciting curiosity; and as far as I can tell without in most cases subsequently boasting of their secret knowledge. This secrecy held between husband and wife, brother and brother, father and child.

Apart from 'official secrets', most Englishmen appear to be 'naturally' secretive about their incomes (it was quite common for working-class women not to know their husbands' wages), their sexual life, their more distant relatives and other matters of quite minor import. It seems possible that part of this secretiveness derives from the same source as the shyness discussed in the previous section.

I can recall no literary allusion to this ability to keep secrets before the second half of the nineteenth century; though it is worth noting that the Great Secret of eighteenth-century Europe—Free masonry—was believed to be of English, or at least British origin. From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards (say, with *The Moonstone* and *Edwin Drood*) there develops the specifically English type of crime or detective story, of which one of the central assumptions is that *everybody* is capable of concealing a secret, even though that secret be murder, so that everybody may be a suspect. This is not an essential aspect of the *genre*; in many of the best and most specifically American stories the criminal is early identified, either individually or as belonging to a known group or gang; and the chief interest of the story is in

how the relatively weak and ethical detective can bring the relatively powerful and unscrupulous criminal to justice.

A similar popular type of story, based on the assumption of English secretiveness, is the 'secret agent' story, given world-wide popularity by such writers as William Le Queux, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Somerset Maugham, Eric Ambler. These fictions indeed seem to have been taken seriously by all England's real and potential enemies; the ingenuity and machiavellism regularly ascribed to the 'British Secret Service' by National-Socialist or Communist propaganda testify to a fairly widespread belief in every Englishman's capacity for dissimulation.

IV. THE ADOPTION OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES

In one respect the myth of the ubiquitous 'Secret Service' seems to have some connexion with fact. There would appear to be no portion of the globe, no matter how obscure, how unattractive by general standards, how difficult its language or peculiar its customs, which is not extremely well known and loved by at least a few English men and women. The Arabo-philés—Doughty, Philby, T. E. Lawrence, Gertrude Bell, Freya Stark—are the best-known examples, for they all wrote fascinating books on their loved and adopted country. Other climes do not seem to induce the same ability to write good prose as does the Arabian desert; but I would venture to assert that there is no country in the world which some Englishman does not know better than almost any of the natives.

This adoption of foreign countries is, of course, a trait of a very small minority, and probably almost entirely confined to members of the middle and upper classes. Even so it would seem to call for explanation; as far as I can tell this phenomenon is not reproduced on anything like the same scale in any other country.



There are many other traits which have been noted by a number of writers, both foreign and domestic, both scientific and impressionist, some of which can be listed fairly summarily:

(a) The tendency to act 'as if' in possession of great strength. Derivatives from this assumption of great strength include the willingness to accept compromises, the easy assumption of a judicial role (e.g. as chairmen on multi-national committees),

unwillingness to put forth the greatest possible effort except in situations of desperate danger 'with one's back to the wall', a tendency to understatement (since boasting is unnecessary for the stronger), a protective-patronizing attitude to non-Englishmen.

(b) A comparatively low interest in sexual activity or sexual love. (I have an impression that this holds true—to the extent that it is true at all—above all for males of the middle and upper classes. Scattered observations suggest that there is a considerable amount of sexual jealousy in the working classes.)

(c) An appreciation of social complexity and social ritual.

(d) A positive enjoyment of 'privacy' and a respect for the privacy of others.

(e) Inarticulateness—especially in giving words to deeply felt emotions.

(f) A love of rural life, and a generally accepted myth that England is typically rural.

(g) Ruthlessness in war and in commerce.

(h) Gentleness in most personal relationships.

These traits, like the traits I discussed at greater length, have never been co-ordinated into a coherent and (psychologically speaking) logical system. I hope that this work will be undertaken in the not too distant future.

ROMAN VLAD

LUIGI DALLAPICCOLA

THE creative activity of the composers who, during the first third of our century, brought about the modern reform of Italian music, developed beneath the sign of a double historical necessity. On the one hand, it sought to twist together again the various strands of an instrumental tradition ignored by the opera-writers of the nineteenth century, while on the other hand, it had to align Italian music with the latest developments of the *corpus formale* of European music, from which those same opera-writers had seceded.

The stylistic progress of this generation of Italian composers was shaped, then, by two factors, the one, *archaic*, and produced by the reactivation of pre-classical models, and the other, *modern*, and determined by the assimilation of neo-Russian advances in technique, French impressionism and central European expressionist chromaticism.

The degree of immediacy and autonomy of which the new Italian music enjoys the advantage in the range of contemporary musical culture in the West, is given precisely by the measure in which the above composers have succeeded in extracting from these heterogeneous beginnings original and homogeneous stylistic results. The best of the composers of the following generation did not long-dally upon the positions gained by their predecessors, but continued the process of assimilation by means of which the most valid results of the fertile creative experiences completed outside Italy, were realized and inserted in the round of Italian musical culture. Thus Petrassi was seen to show himself sensitive to the example of Hindemith and even more so to that given by Stravinsky with the *Symphony of Psalms*, but to Dallapiccola belongs, instead, the merit of acclimatizing in Italy Viennese *dodecaphonism*, the extreme stage in the evolution of European music. But Dallapiccola is to be distinguished at the outset from the main group of those who practise composition in twelve tones, precisely by the fundamental dialectical condition in which he assists along with nearly all the important modern Italian composers. In virtue of this condition, Dallapiccola did not arrive at dodecaphony by the 'normal' route, that is, by retracing, philogenetically, the road from Wagner to the early Schönberg, a road indicated by the progressive chromaticizing of diatonic harmony. Instead he tied himself to the astringent modal diatonicism of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.¹ In a second phase Dallapiccola began to interweave in the diatonic warp of his works ever more numerous chromatic fibres which, from a certain moment onwards, assumed the aspect of true and proper dodecaphonic series and ended by absorbing every remaining diatonic element in his most recent works. In Dallapiccola, therefore, the overcoming of the traditional harmonic tonal system was not brought about by internal erosion as in Schönberg, but was achieved thanks to a gradual interpenetration of heptatonic and dodecaphonic spaces.

For ease of exposition, and in view of what has been said above, Dallapiccola's creative activity can be divided into three periods. To the first of these periods, embracing the years 1930 to 1936, belong compositions, for the most part diatonic, such as the *Partita* for orchestra (completed 1932 and following several youthful works like the *Canti della mia terra* for chorus, soloists and orchestra, the two *Canti di Jacopone* for chorus and orchestra, the *Canzone del Kalewala* and *Estate*, both for chorus), three *Studi* for soprano and chamber orchestra (1932), a *Rapsodia*, *Studio per la morte del Conte Orlando* for voice and chamber orchestra (1933), the *Divertimento in quattro esercizi* for soprano and five instruments (1934), the *Musica per tre pianoforti (Inni)* (1935) and *Sei Cori di Michelangelo Buonarroti il giovane* (three groups: the first for unaccompanied mixed voices, the second for four solo singers or chamber chorus and seventeen instruments, and the third for mixed voices and large orchestra).

The diatonic restraint, the modal character, the deliberately archaic structure of the melodies often containing echoes of the madrigals, the rigorous counterpoint of the play of voices, the predilection shown by the composer for typically pre-classical forms² could all easily invoke for the works of this period the adjective 'neo-classical'. In reality the diatonic simplicity of Dallapiccola's music never acquires either the elegant affectation of the pieces of far too many composers living in the twentieth-century neo-classical arcady, or the equivocal character of the provocative simplicity of a Satie. On the contrary the works of Dallapiccola carry the imprint of great expressive vigour and of a *humour* frequently rough and cutting. The angular development of the voices, turned in upon itself, giving rise every so often to short polytonal episodes,³ generates a harmonic network which for the most part transcends the schemes of classical harmony and draws together the most harsh intervals. The firm, malleable and often roughish musical material thus resulting, lends itself particularly to a violent and at times angry accentuation, which reveals one of the most characteristic aspects of Dallapiccola's musical personality, giving to his music an authentic *furor dramaticus*, for the large part controlled. Even in the earliest works, however, in contrast to this violent sonority, there are moments⁴ of a delicate and precious beauty of timbre which, outside of all impressionist significance, lifts the musical discourse on to the

level of a pure and refined lyricism, which defines another characteristic fundamental to the composer's sensibility: Dallapiccola is endowed with a truly unique taste for the quality of sound. These passages recall the chaste sonority and crystal clarity of certain transcendental moments in the works of Busoni, to whose example Dallapiccola owes not a little.⁵

Some critics have held against Dallapiccola his extraordinary feeling for euphony. One of these, René Leibowitz, in an essay already quoted, speaks of 'préoccupations hedonistes qui font que Dallapiccola sacrifie à un effet de sonorité pure, à cet élément décoratif, au lieu de se borner à l'expression purement architectonique du discours musical. C'est à cela, je crois, qu'est dû l'emploi presque inconscient, peut-être, d' *embellir* une partie que pourrait paraître trop nue, ou trop pauvre sans le doublement.'⁶ In spite of this, others have levelled the contrary accusation at Dallapiccola, citing the excessive architectonic aspect of his music. This they derive from the fact that not only has the music been cast in complex formal matrices but also uses, in our opinion quite felicitously, contrapuntal devices, and from idiosyncrasies of writing. An example of this latter, is Dallapiccola's especial method of surrounding the *vox principalis* with short, incisive diatonic figures, rigid almost to the point of geometry, which, with their contours unchanged, constantly repeated, linked together in a multiple chain of canon forms, are inserted in asymmetrical rhythmic schemes in such a way that the metrical accents within them are continually misplaced. This 'playing' with diatonic segments can still be found in the *Piccolo concerto per Muriel Couvreur* and in the *Preghiera di Maria Stuarda*.

Neither of these contrasting orders of criticism is accepted here. The alleged 'hedonistic decorativeness' of Dallapiccola is simply the exceptional agreeableness of many of the composer's sonorities, and, as may be deduced from them, the study of it, on the contrary, implies, rather than excludes, profound imaginative significances, creating that 'most sweet and starry region' where, so Fedele d'Amico⁷ rightly affirms, is always to be found Dallapiccola's most authentic dreams.

Yet a further point of Leibowitz's criticism requires rejection, precisely his evaluation of the works of this first period, with which we are here concerned, in relation to the more recent of Dallapiccola's compositions where he follows the dodecaphonist

precepts, creating, in the opinion of Leibowitz, his only valid works, the only ones to be taken into consideration. The critical error of the fanatical apologist for dodecaphonic purism derives from judgement based on *a priori* dogma and of formal preconceptions. In this essay no obligation is felt to affirm the necessity and consequent legitimacy of applying the canons of the dodecaphonist system—or of any other set of musical laws—except by the means of, *a posteriori*, situating the creative act which led to a musical form and in the function of the expressive significances which may be deduced from it. The affective content, the only true sign of the value of a work of art, is certainly not lacking in compositions like the *Partita*, the *Inni* and above all the *Canti di Michelangelo Buonarroti il giovane*. With Dallapiccola, formal dialectic hardly ever assumes the role of a formula to be adapted in cases of inventive poverty; his conscience of style and his taste act as a healthy break or rather as a filter cleansing and purifying the sonorous material which pours from a creative fancy which shows itself exuberant, almost volcanic.

Although the works to which reference has so far been made are constructed upon a diatonic basis, there is, nevertheless, to be seen in them passages which have gone outside the heptatonic modal schemata, prefiguring in this way the future chromatic developments of Dallapiccola's style. Thus in the *Siciliana* (last movement of the *Divertimento*) the principal idea is unfolded at the beginning in four notes (F, A flat, C flat, E). Joined to two other similar groups of four notes, this thematic nucleus formed later the dodecaphonic *series* used by Dallapiccola to create his masterpiece, the *Canti di Prigionia*.⁸ In the *Coro degli Zitti* (first piece of the third group of the *Cori di Michelangelo Buonarroti il giovane*), the theme of the *Ciaccona* is noticeably designed to include all the notes of the chromatic scale arranged in successive fourths.⁹

The second part of this piece, a fugue, ends with another series,¹⁰ which, transposed and modified as to its last note, is introduced into the final cadenza of the third part of the *Coro degli Zitti*, delineated against a diatonic chord of the seventh (C, E, G, B). Naturally it is not really a case here of speaking of the twelve-tone system, since in this work the use of a complete series is sporadic and does not appear to correspond to a preordained formal intention.

On the contrary it can be deduced that the composer was led to abandon the solar brightness of his diatonic modes and to adopt in many instances a chromaticism, neutral as to mode, in order that he could realize that dark atmosphere of sound, nocturnal and freezing, with which he surrounds that part of the *Coro* where, with hisses and whispers, these words are pronounced,

'Prevented from seeing either sun or sky we are the mute retainers and messengers, hostages of silence'.¹¹

Effecting a complete contrast of *chiaroscuro*, the *Gagliarda* (*Coro dei Lanzi Briachi*), following the *Ciaccona*, opens in the vigorous Ionian mode and rounds off the whole work with a final luminous chord, the perfect of C major. This cycle belongs, in virtue of the clear diatonic character of the first two groups and of the *Gagliarda*, to the first creative period of Dallapiccola as defined above, but, following from the chromatic structure of the *Ciaccona*, it indicates as well the opening of a second phase in the composer's activity.

To this phase belong works like the *Laudi* (1936-7) for a voice of the upper range and chamber orchestra, the opera *Volo di notte* (1937-9) with a libretto taken from Saint-Exupéry's novel, the *Piccolo Concerto per Muriel Couvreur* (1939-41) for piano and chamber orchestra, the *Canti di Prigionia* (1938-41) for chorus and several instruments, the ballet *Marsia* (1942-3). In the texture of these pieces diatonic and dodecaphonic elements exist side by side and the composer has succeeded in forging out of them a stylistic synthesis in which the perfect formal equilibrium is almost miraculous. Precisely from this synthesis of contrasting sonorities spring virtually unsuspected musical images. So, in *Volo di notte*, taking up again a musical idea previously evolved in the *Laudi*, Dallapiccola projected a dodecaphonic series against a perfect chord of the tonic of B major, as he had done before, only accidentally, in the *Coro degli Zitti*. The twelve notes grafted upon this chord do not take on the dynamic function proper to notes of transition or of modulation, precursors of a harmonic tension, translated into a warmth of expression, but, in gentle collision with the notes of the triad, dissociates them from their harmonic relations. It is almost as if the 'harmonics', freed in this process of delightful fission, become a halo around the sounds and show them in a wholly new light, giving to them a lyrical affectivity not yet classified. In this opera the use of series has become more relevant to the structure of the musical discourse into which it

enters in the typical forms of inversion, *motus cancrizans*, and the inversion of this latter, though without the composer's becoming inhibited from the use of other formal means more tied to tradition. If in the *Coro degli Zitti* the diatonic and chromatic constituents exist in close symbiosis, then in the *Piccolo concerto* they are presented as dissociated anew, and in the complete diatonic atmosphere of this composition, the dodecaphonic *Notturmo* is signalled as an episode, within shadowy parentheses. Even in *Marsia* the opposition of diatonic to chromatic space does not find its justification in any abstract stylization, but is explained and maintained by the functioning of emotive contrasts. The earthly 'humanity' of Marsyas is expressed in the warm poetry of a pentatonic theme which is accompanied, at his death, by rarefied dodecaphonic sonorities. To the activity of Apollo has been assigned a series, but his dance 'piena di luminosita onnipossente' (so the score describes it) is given through clearly diatonic means. The work, however, in which the composer achieves the closest interpenetration, the most perfect arrangement of all the formal elements he has so far used, is the triptych, *Canti di Prigionia*, where he has succeeded in giving to these elements the highest power of expression.

La Preghiera di Maria Stuarda, the *Invocazione di Boezio*, the *Congedo di Girolamo Savonarola* are the songs, dramatic and extreme, of three condemned prisoners. A complex instrumentation—two pianos, two harps, six timpani, xylophone, vibraphone, bells and other percussion—is joined to the voices of the chorus, creating a landscape of sounds, at times gloomy and 'senza luce',¹² shivering with dramatic tremors or dissolving in fluid and timbres of an aural beauty never before heard, while at other times it is lit by the piercing, lyrical sweetness of the mute line of the voices singing with mouths closed. Full of echoes of the inexorable bells, pervaded by the threat and warning of the Gregorian *Dies Irae*, it uses for its counter-subject four notes which, as has already been said, are lengthened eventually into a dodecaphonic series. The inspired lyricism, the extraordinary emotive intensity and the dramatic validity of these three songs are really indescribable and show the *Canti di Prigionia* as one of the most original and highest achievements of the whole of contemporary music.¹³ Of few compositions, as of this one, can it be asserted that it possesses an authentic contemporary content. And this, not because the work

refers to contingent events and facts but because it is possible to find in the work that its emotive beginnings were capable of maturing in the mind of the artist only by the living experience of the dramatic situations through which humanity has passed and continues to pass.¹⁴ Indeed, Massimo Mila is quite right to say that 'A few, a very few, musicians have an intense awareness, heightened by their intellect, of the tragedy within our time—of the religious struggle which is carried on to the last drop of blood—between the spiritual ideal of liberty and the tyrannous brutality of matter and its inexorable determinism.'¹⁵

Mila forfeits our confidence, however, when he maintains that, 'Because Dallapiccola lacks a consoling faith in an idealist historical providence, the critical activity of his intellect leads him to a suffering pessimism which inhibits all hope of victory. Thus the sum of his mental processes accords with that deep participation in the sorrows of the world, with that torn commitment of the soul, which constitutes the salient characteristic of central European expressionism.'

The desperate and haunting desolation which impregnates the emotive world of Schönberg, the *horror vacui* to be experienced in the monosyllables of Webern, are not to be met in Dallapiccola. He has not abandoned himself to the passive contemplation of the tragic condition of man, but he reacts against it with violent impulses, a *motus animae* of protest and rebellion which he expresses sometimes in fitful bouts of an unusual expressive violence.¹⁶ Bitter scepticism, the uncomfortable extremes of a hopeless sadness, however, are unknown to this composer.¹⁷

If the composition of the *Canti di Prigionia* answered an urgency felt by the composer to express the ardour of the supreme moments of existential experience, then the three cycles of *Liriche greche* (*Cinque frammenti di Saffo* for voice and chamber orchestra (1942), *Sex Carmina Alcaeï una voce canenda nonnullis comitantibus musicis* (1943), *Due liriche di Anacreonte*, for voice, with two clarinettes, viola and piano (1945)), with which Dallapiccola's dodecaphonic period opens, are born from an opposite need, from the 'desire to evade the characteristic ugliness of our world'.¹⁸

This retreat Dallapiccola finds in that 'most sweet and starry region' which, as has already been said, has always constituted his

'most authentic dream' and which the adoption and integration of the dodecaphonic technique finally permitted him to realize.

Previously, in the middle part of the *Congedo di Savonarola*, the process of absorbing diatonic elements into chromatic space appeared particularly satisfactory. The sonorous woof of this fragment, however, is woven exclusively of chromatic lines arranged in three simultaneous canons: two for the voices, one of which is *cancrizans*, and one for the instruments which in the middle of the section begins a complete reversal while the choir continues to develop its imitations. The formal scheme of this canon section calls to mind the example of *Mondfleck*, the eighteenth piece of *Pierrot Lunaire*, where Schönberg, emulating the prodigious counterpoint of the Flemish composers, writes a fugue above a canon of the same fugue but in notes of diminished value and then turns this whole ensemble round crab-fashion.

Where in the *Canti di Prigione* complete chromaticism is realized fragmentarily, in the *Liriche greche* and other recent works the formal development of the twelve-tone system is applied consistently.¹⁹ It is unnecessary to give here any opinion as to the legitimacy or otherwise of composition with twelve tones. The only possible judgement of this or any other system must be made on the plane of concrete and practical application, that is by considering the measure it permits of the composer's achieving a musical form adequate to his inspiration. In the case of the *Liriche greche* it seems that it is properly the harness of the 'system' which enabled Dallapiccola to preserve his musical imagination from all those elements which might have sullied the limpid poetry he had sought to attain. To take into account the necessity which assisted at the birth of these complicated forms, it is sufficient only to consider the themes of the *Sex Carmina* or of the first of the *Liriche di Anacreonte* and to attempt the substitution of one note for another, and it will be found without fail that it is not in answer to a gratuitous formal undertaking, to a sort of gamble with himself, that the composer has constructed those series.

Doubtless the adoption on the part of Dallapiccola of the technique of composition based on the systematic use of series, is owed to the example of Schönberg and his followers. In this respect Leibowitz has spoken above all of the influence of Webern as decisive, but already in this essay the evidence has been proffered

to distinguish the emotive perspective of Dallapiccola's compositions from those of the members of the *Schönbergkreis*. In this way Dallapiccola has entered into the current of dodecaphonism and yet preserved intact his own character, creating works with an unquestionable independence of the Viennese models. By only analysing the fourth of the *Cinque frammenti di Saffo*, the *Expositio* in the *Sex Carmina* or the canon which opens the first of the *Liriche di Anacreonte*, it is possible to understand the characteristics which divide Dallapiccola's style from that of the other dodecaphonists. The series upon which the *Saffo* fragment is based, is made up in such a way as to permit of separation into four harmonic nuclei: a perfect major triad (C, E, G), a perfect minor chord (E flat, G flat, B flat), a chord of the sixth and seventh (C sharp, A, B), and a triad of two minor thirds (D, F, A flat). In the development of the pattern of sound, these elements, such as they are, provide an overwhelming thematic material. In the first of the *Carmina* the two notes with which the voice ends its exposition of the theme and its *krebs* are inserted in a complex of counterpoint formed of the series used in the fifth fragment from *Saffo* and the same series with lengthened values. It so occurs that the bringing together of these three different series happens upon two perfect chords (C sharp, F i.e. E sharp, G sharp, and A, D, F sharp).

Even in the three-part canon, developed in the opening measures of the *Liriche di Anacreonte*, the separate voices, rather than colliding by turns, compose into pleasing axes of less dissonant intervals, setting up virtually 'harmonic frameworks': so that in the third bar, behind the contrapuntal fabric, there can be discerned first, a diminished triad (A, C, E flat), and then a chord of the eleventh (A flat, C, E flat, G flat, D). In the following bar a chord of the seventh is implied (E flat, G, B flat, D flat), and finally, in the fourth bar, appears, no longer by implication, but definitely affirmed and enjoyed, a languid chord of the ninth (E, G sharp, B, D, F sharp) which in respect of the chord of *A minor*²⁰ with which the musical discourse stops in the following two measures, must possess the tonal significance of a true and proper *dominant*.

Naturally the music of Dallapiccola does not always allow a 'spectrum analysis' as simple as this and capable of such expression in traditional terms. Nevertheless the passages cited stand as a demonstration that he does not aim at radically eliminating, or at

least in escaping from, all those elements that in some way are able to give rise to assonances with the past harmonic-tonal system, as Webern sought to do, but that, on the contrary, following the way indicated by Alban Berg, Dallapiccola most often tries to group together, within the number of the twelve tones, harmonic entities analogous to those upon which traditional music is founded. These very entities, rediscovered and organically engaged in panchromatic space, appear redeemed of all stereotyped significances acquired by many centuries of use, and take on a completely fresh meaning.²¹ Ever more in evidence, a research after the setting of tonal forces within the framework of complete chromaticism informs the later works (*Ciaccona*, *Intermezzo ed Adagio* for 'cello solo and *Rencesvals* for voice and piano), in which Dallapiccola, after the Apollonian and parenthetical departure of the *Canti Greci*, returns for inspiration to human events of greater actuality.²² In these compositions the series often tends to lose its thematic character and to gain the part of an anonymous system of references, of a *luogo modale*, inasmuch as it is similar to the role traditionally assigned to the scale of seven sounds. Repeating insistently different 'fractions' of the series, prolonging individual notes in the form of drawn-out pedals, Dallapiccola succeeds in giving to pre-ordained notes, for passages more or less extensive, the character of veritable tonal centres.

After such examples from the forms of the composer, it is ultimately much more to the point to establish that Dallapiccola has succeeded, thanks to a superlative mastery of the twelve-tone technique, in bending the formal means offered by this system to his purpose achieving a whole rich range of expression the like of which has never been equalled by any other dodecaphonist composer.

The solemn and, at the same time, dramatic *Ciaccona*, the drastic²³ *Intermezzo* with its visionary²⁴ trio, the extremely beautiful *Adagio*,²⁵ the heroic *allure* of the first *Rencesvals* fragment divided by those impressive interjections, the splendid theme with descending ninths, the sad, languishing conclusion of the third fragment of the same work, the anguished song of the *Due Pezzi* (*Sarabanda, Fanfara e Fuga*) which, in two versions, for violin and piano and for symphony orchestra, is the composer's most recent work, are all unforgettable experiences which bear witness, as has been affirmed here, that the creative power of Dallapiccola, although

often developing through strange and labyrinthine paths, is not exhausted by the search for abstract formal beauty and aims at the formulation of musical images with an absolute value.

NOTES

¹ Among the classical and preclassical models of Dallapiccola, René Leibowitz, in an essay in the review *Archie*, lists the names of Frescobaldi and Bach.

² The *Partita* includes a *Passacaglia*, a *Burlesca*, a *Recitativo Fanfara*, a *Naenia*; *Tre studi* are each entitled respectively *Sarabanda*, *Giga* and *Canzone*: the movements of the *Divertimento* are *Introduzione*, *Arietta*, *Bourree* and *Siciliana*; in the third group of the Michelangelo songs are included a *Ciaccona* divided by a fugue, and a *Gagliarda*.

³ Similar episodes are to be found, for example, in the second section of the second group of the *Michelangelo* (*capriccio*) and in the cadenza at the end of *Introduzione* to the *Divertimento*.

⁴ It is sufficient to think in this connexion of the sweet and intimate *Naenia Beatae Virginiae Mariae* which concludes the *Partita*.

⁵ It is not the least of Dallapiccola's merits to have contributed (even by means of editing the Italian version of his writing) to the rediscovery in Italy of this great musician who, because of his great activity outside Italy, has not been the influence he might have been.

⁶ In making such a point Leibowitz shows that he does not understand that in the works of Dallapiccola, as of other contemporary composers, two notes sounded together instead of forming an interval amalgamate into a single timbre. It is precisely in this function that Dallapiccola's doublings and octaves find their justification in the formal means he employs.

⁷ Review of *Canti Greci* in the *Rassegna Musicale* 2/XVII, April 1947, on page 166.

⁸ Structurally the three groups of four notes (E, G, B flat, F sharp; A, C, E flat, B; D, F, A flat, D flat) which form this series are alike with the exception of the fourth intervals which in the first two groups are augmented fifths.

⁹ F, B, F sharp, C, G, C sharp, G sharp, D, A, E flat, B flat, to which on inversion is added the twelfth tone E.

¹⁰ E sharp, B, F sharp, A, D sharp, D, G sharp, C sharp, C, E, A sharp, G.

¹¹ Note that the composer uses the whispered pronunciation of the sibilants which run through the text as a means of creating timbre so that words, too, have sonorous significance.

¹² This instruction is to be seen on page 11 of the score.

¹³ It is superfluous to discuss the assertion of Leibowitz where, in all prejudice, he pretends to find in these *Canti* a consistent influence of Bartok. To an informed audience such an assertion must appear not merely as an error but as a critical *lapsus* since it is without any possible foundation.

¹⁴ The proof of this lies in the evident imaginative significance of the music without referring to the metaphorical sense and to the obvious allusion contained in the title of the *Canti* and in the tenor of the texts. Dallapiccola replied to an inquiry (*Musica*, 3-4, I, June 1946): 'Words like those of Mary

Stuart, "In harsh captivity, in wretched torment, I desire you", like those of Boethius, "Happy is he who is able to cast off the chains of heavy earth", and like those of Savonarola, "I fear nothing whilst I hope have in Thee O Lord", cannot possibly be equivocal.'

¹⁵ Massimo Mila, *Breve storia della musica*, Bianchi-Giovini, Milano, page 338.

¹⁶ At the opening of the *Congedo* the score has precisely these indications, 'con violenza', 'tagliente', 'furioso'.

¹⁷ Hope, for Dallapiccola, is certainly not founded upon the faith of idealism in historical providence, but is assuredly derived from faith in divine providence. Significantly Dallapiccola adjoins to the word 'finis' in his works those others 'Deo gratias'.

¹⁸ Thus wrote Dallapiccola in the reply already cited.

¹⁹ Except for an ingenious *Sonatina Canonica* upon the *Capricci di Paganini*, in which Dallapiccola constructs an involved contrapuntal edifice using almost exclusively diatonic themes from that master of the violin.

²⁰ And even the A flat, which rubs 'harmoniously' against this chord, is nothing if not an enharmonic camouflage of G sharp, *proper* to the key of A minor.

²¹ For most of ten years or so Schönberg himself has been employed in the effort of the tonal crystallization of dodecaphonic space. In Dallapiccola, however, this polarizing of so-called 'atonal' chromaticism occurs spontaneously at the end of that process of assimilation demonstrated in these pages. In virtue of this the diatonic elements, mingled in chromatic space, remain there latent if not straightaway emerging, as has been seen, from the chaos of indetermined tonality as explicitly definable entities. This diatonic immanence confers upon Dallapiccola's music its special unmistakable tone.

²² The composer says: 'For he who desires and is able to read, for he who knows how to listen, some part of the recent tragic experience is reflected in the *Ciaccona, Intermezzo ed Adagio* for 'cello solo. (Above all the intermezzo composed in September of 1945, and in a form perhaps more immediate, *Rencesvals* (1946) for voice and piano. "Not by chance does the last line express." (Ibid.))

²³ 'con espressione drastica' so the score directs.

²⁴ The composer indicates 'visionario'.

²⁵ This piece puts in the forefront Dallapiccola's extraordinary virtuosity of instrumental writing (comparable only to that written by Bach in the Suites for solo violin and 'cello) which none the less allows Dallapiccola to realize in the course of the *Adagio* a perfect three-voice canon.

[From *L'Immagine*, Rome. Translated by TONI DEL RENZIO]

JAMES LORD

THE BOY WHO WROTE 'NO'

IN Harkton it would have been quite impossible not to take account of it. Harkton was a small place, which took account of everything. And this seemed so strange.

It was on the sidewalk in front of Hovey's Dry Goods Store, just across the square from the city hall. 'NO', written in large white chalk letters on the cement sidewalk. There was something disturbing about it, something indefinably and persistently disturbing. Because it had a look of finality and of aggressiveness about it, that word, the way it was written there. It could not possibly have been the work of prankish school-children; they would never have gone to such obvious trouble. The letters were very large, they covered the entire sidewalk, stretching vertically from the store front all the way to the curb, a distance of at least six feet; and each letter had been carefully retraced several times, enlarging it. In addition, the writing must have been done at night, after ten o'clock, since surely no one would have attempted such a thing as long as there was a chance that people would be passing through the square.

Someone had sent for the sheriff, and he came across from the city hall in his shirt sleeves. For it was spring, brief as that season always seemed to be in Harkton, though so much the more poignant for its briefness. A fair breeze wafted odours of reviving fertility through the town. The sheriff took a deep breath and yawned. He was a large man, but large without being tall or fat; there was a mass to him, a physical presence that imposed itself. The silver star badge of his office seemed most appropriate pinned on his belt. He walked toward the group of men that stood clustered round in front of Hovey's and he greeted all together with a hearty, 'Good morning, boys'.

Matthew Hovey stepped out to meet him. 'Morning, Ralph,' he said. He was a sharp-eyed, sharp-nosed, thin, sleek man. Matthew Hovey, not more than thirty-five or so. He'd inherited the store from his father, and had made it flourish; some said he

was the richest man in town, but that was merely gossip. He took the sheriff by the arm and, in a tone half mocking and half serious, said, 'Now just have a look at this. Make a little room for the sheriff, boys.'

For some moments the sheriff stared pensively down at the enormous 'NO' there on the sidewalk. He grunted. 'Well, well,' he said, apparently perplexed. He pinched his lower lip between thumb and forefinger and frowned. 'Well, now I've seen it. Now what? I know just as much about it as you do.'

'Something peculiar about it, it seems to me,' muttered Hovey, almost petulantly. 'It's too big. And why right in front of my store?'

'Oh, it's probably just a gag,' said the sheriff. 'You'll probably find out all about it before the day is over.'

'Yes, it's probably just some sort of a gag,' echoed a number of the others in the group.

'Maybe so,' agreed Matthew Hovey grudgingly.

And there was nothing to be done but erase the letters. Hovey called his errand boy. The curious group withdrew a little distance along the sidewalk and the huge 'NO' was promptly obliterated by the errand boy with a mop and pail of water. The damp cement, where the letters had been, dried quickly in the warm spring sun. Now that the word had disappeared, what more was there to be said?

For a few minutes the group of men remained, chatting; then one by one they went off about their business. That day there was some talk and speculation in the town about the appearance of that 'NO' there on the sidewalk in front of Hovey's. But it didn't last long. During the afternoon something of greater interest took place. It was said, and the news moved fast, that a little girl had been bitten by a dog, that the dog was rabid, that the dog had gone mad and would have to be tracked down and shot, that the little girl might have to be rushed forty miles to the hospital in Granville, and so on, and so on. In reality the little girl had only been pawed by the dog, an old but still playful collie; it was her obstinate shrieking as her mother carried her home and her screaming insistence that she must have been bitten which initiated the excited and varying reports. By nightfall no one any longer thought of the 'NO' which that morning had seemed so strange.

But the next day people were obliged to think of it again, because there was another. The second 'NO' by itself probably would never have aroused any curiosity at all, it would have been erased and forgotten; but it was immediately linked in the general mind with the first. It was less spectacular, less conspicuous, far less large, apparently scrawled hastily. However, what it may have lacked in presentation it certainly compensated for with an excess of temerity. The first 'NO', after all, though it had indeed seemed to reflect upon Hovey's, had been written on the sidewalk, which was public property. But the second was there, for all to behold in consternation, written in white soap across the always-spotless pane of glass set into the wide redoubtable front door of the Harkton Savings Bank. Now the affair could no longer be dismissed as 'probably just a gag'. Matthew Hovey proclaimed in tones of indisputable certitude that there was 'something mighty peculiar about this'. And of course someone was sent to bring the sheriff.

Elias Turner, president of the Bank, refused to be at all concerned with the matter. He remained in his office, munching at a thick cigar; but he sent his son Seth, a lanky taciturn young man who was expected eventually to become president in his turn. Eyed by inquisitive speculators, Seth Turner stood at the top of the Bank's imposing front steps. The Bank was the only building in Harkton, even including the Baptist Church, that had such steps: eight of them, of massive grey granite, with black iron hand-rails at either side. 'A bank's got to have an important look about it,' old Josiah Turner, Seth's grandfather, had said; and he'd ordered the steps built.

When the sheriff arrived, the group of curious men and women crowded forward, anxious to miss no detail. 'There's something mighty peculiar about this, if you ask me,' said Matthew Hovey, who had followed the sheriff up the steps. A number of the others murmured their assent.

'What do you make of it, sheriff?' Seth Turner asked placidly.

This time the sheriff was obviously more than perplexed; he was irritated. 'Well, there's nothing to be gained by standing around staring at it,' he said. 'The only thing to do for the time being is to get it cleaned off there. And, Seth, you can tell your father that I'll see what can be done about this.'

The offending letters were forthwith wiped away, and after a

little while the group of curious onlookers dispersed. But they talked, discussed, wondered; the news made a rapid circuit of the town. Nor was there this time any other event to supplant it in the public attention. All eagerly awaited the following morning to see whether there would be another 'NO'. Harkton looked at itself and wondered.

In his office the sheriff paced up and down. His deputy sat with his chair tilted against the wall, and in one hand lazily swung a tattered copy of *True Detective*. It was obvious, the sheriff muttered, that there was only one thing to do: they would both have to sit up that night hoping to surprise the stealthy writer at work. He was thoroughly annoyed. After all, he said, the whole thing was quite silly. Why not simply ignore it? But there was an election now not too far in the future. And besides, who would change the ways of Harkton?

That night there was a brilliant three-quarter moon which threw down its steady beam into all corners of the square. The evening was mild, such a one as rarely came upon the town, filled with a vague and enveloping fragrance. Harkton had gone to bed and now was still. The sheriff's office window looked out upon the square. He and the deputy sat there together, with a pot of strong coffee on a little electric stove between them. They didn't talk. The sheriff irritably drummed the thick square ends of his fingers against the chair arm. It was nearly eleven.

When midnight had finished striking from the belfry of the Baptist Church, the deputy said, 'Maybe he won't be coming'.

'Maybe he won't,' said the sheriff.

'And even if he does write "NO" somewhere, maybe it won't be in the square.'

'Maybe.'

'It's a nuisance, having to sit here waiting like this.'

'Yes.'

They took some coffee, and some time passed while they drank.

Then suddenly in the moonlight they saw him. How confidently he walked out there toward the middle of the square, so serene, even as the surest of wild animals in the depths of its safe jungle is serene. He made not a single furtive motion, and his shadow preceded him with assurance as he went, like a guardian. In the centre of the square he stopped and stood still, looking round.

The deputy got up abruptly. 'Let's go get him,' he whispered. 'No, no, wait, sit down, be quiet,' replied the sheriff impatiently. 'We've got to have some proof that this is really the one. He hasn't done anything yet. There's no law that says a person can't walk around after midnight. We'll have to wait and see what he does.'

They did not have to wait a long time. After one or two minutes of placidly surveying the square, the figure out there stooped and began to make wide swift motions with one arm above the pavement. He was obviously writing now. When the sheriff and the deputy burst out from the city hall and started running toward him, he was up at once with a bound and running away from them. He ran much faster than they, and he might easily have escaped; but he was unlucky. As he reached the corner he dropped something. He turned back to pick it up, and they caught him. Not too gently they dragged him back between them to the centre of the square, to see what he had been doing. And there it was—how quickly he'd written it—a great red 'NO' painted across the pavement; it was red, the colour of blood, and shone with macabre insinuation under the moonlight. A small paint can stood next to it. In one hand the captive held his paint brush, which he had dropped in his haste. He was but a boy.

'It's George Sickles,' said the deputy.

The sheriff grunted. 'So you're the one who's been writing "NO" like this all over the place,' he exclaimed angrily. He shook the boy by the arm, hard. 'Now what's the idea? Do you think this is a joke?'

George Sickles was a tall boy, with quite thin narrow shoulders and wide hips and excessively long arms, with straight red hair, and with a large dark birthmark in the centre of his very very white right cheek. He stood unresisting between the two men, but he didn't reply to the sheriff's questions. He remained impassive.

'And what is your father going to say about this?' demanded the sheriff.

George didn't answer. He didn't appear to be frightened and he didn't act as though he were aware he'd done anything wrong, anything for which he might be punished.

'What are we going to do with you?' said the sheriff, shaking the boy again roughly. 'Eh? What are we going to do with you, do you think?'

'I don't know,' George said. His voice was quite high-pitched for a boy of seventeen or eighteen, but it was steady. He didn't look at either of the men; he just stood there, with the paint brush held tight in one hand.

'All right now,' said the sheriff, 'we'll escort you straight home. And if I know Edwin Sickles, and I certainly do, he'll have something to say about this. Pick up your paint can and come on.'

Submissively George picked up the can of paint. He put the brush into it and held it in front of him away from his clothes. Then the three of them started off, the boy between the two men, leaving the stark crimson 'NO' alone in the centre of the square in the moonlight.

Edwin Sickles was Harkton's dentist, a most respected personage in the community, member of the school board and stern upholder of the Baptist Church, of which his wife Martha was a deaconess. He was not young; indeed he was old enough to have been George's grandfather, and he acted his age. His hair was white, always fastidiously in order, and his face was wrinkled, but not laxly, not in the usual irregular manner of age: every crease, every furrow was set, precise, hard, as though fixed by a will stronger than the flesh. The word most often and most aptly used to describe him was: *spare*. Dr. Sickles was not known to be a mirthful man. He wore a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles. His wife Martha was very much like him, though she spoke less. She wore dresses which even in Harkton were considered, though not disrespectfully, to be old-fashioned. She was bony and flat-chested, her lips were almost as waxen as her cheeks, and she had a slight but distinct moustache. Edwin and Martha Sickles had had two children. The eldest, Edwina, their daughter, was married and had two children herself and had already begun to resemble her mother. George had been the product of his parents' ending middle age, an outcome of the last possible flicker of whatever passion they had known, more or less of an accident, to which the mother and father had reconciled themselves with becoming fortitude. George's childhood and youth had not been merry. In high school he was neither a very good nor a very bad student; he was not particularly companionable.

The Sickleses' doorbell was an old-fashioned manual one, mounted on the inside of the front door, and it rang with an echoing clang clang clang in the silent night as the sheriff tugged

on the enamel-knobbed handle. There was a moment's tense expectant wait, then a light went on in the front room upstairs. Dr. Sickles's head appeared in the window; his hair was as neatly combed as ever and he had on his spectacles. 'What is it?' he asked calmly, looking down.

'It's the sheriff, Dr. Sickles. I think you'd better come down. We've got your boy here.'

'I'll be right down,' said the doctor.

Lights flashed on simultaneously in one of the neighbouring houses and in the house directly across the street. Heads appeared at windows.

In his habitual unhurried and meticulous manner, Dr. Sickles unbolted and unlocked the front door. He was dressed in a brown flannel bathrobe and had on carpet slippers. 'Please come in, sheriff,' he said. The two men and the boy entered and the doctor calmly closed the door behind them. 'Now what's the trouble, sheriff?' he asked.

'Well, doctor, it seems your boy's the one who's been writing "NO" around the town, first on the sidewalk in front of Hovey's, then on the front door of the Bank, and tonight we caught him after he'd painted "NO" in red paint smack in the middle of the square.' All three men looked at the boy, who still held his paint can in front of him, mutely; he didn't look at them. 'And seeing as how it was your boy, doctor,' the sheriff continued, 'I thought we might as well bring him right along home and let you handle this yourself. After all, there's no question of putting him in jail. He sure didn't mean anything wrong. Everyone knows how kids are sometimes.'

'I appreciate your understanding, sheriff,' said the doctor. 'May I speak to you for a moment outside? George, you will wait here.'

The three men went outside and stood for some moments talking on the doorstep. Then the sheriff and the deputy went away. Dr. Sickles came back inside. His wife, who had been listening unseen at the head of the stairs, now appeared in her long white nightdress, with her hair done up in curlers like little horns all over her head. She stared down at the two below, but did not speak.

The father looked at his son. 'If that paint can came from my cellar,' he said, 'please take it back to its place at once.'

'Yes, father,' replied the boy docilely and he went to do as he had been told.

When he came back, his father said, 'Now you will please explain to me just what this whole business is about.'

'I don't know.'

At the head of the stairs there was a distinct gasp of vexation from Mrs. Sickles.

'Now look here, George,' said the doctor tersely, 'it's getting along to be one o'clock, and I want to hear an explanation of all this directly.'

'I can't explain.'

'You did write the word "NO" as the sheriff said, did you not?'

'Yes.'

'Why?'

'That's what I don't know,' said the boy. He did not appear frightened or troubled. He was placid, and he had an air of being but vaguely aware of the present. 'I really don't know what first made me write "NO". It was late at night, it must have been as late as this, or later maybe. I'd been for a walk, and I . . .'

'You'd been for a *walk*!' repeated his mother from above, incredulous.

'Yes. I went out the back door. I'd been for a walk out beyond the town in the grove where there's a stream running through, where I often go to walk, and I was coming back. It was such a very beautiful night, it was all quiet, and there was a moon.'

'We aren't interested in the moon,' exclaimed the doctor impatiently.

'And I happened to have a piece of chalk in my pocket.'

'How did that happen?' asked Mrs. Sickles.

'I must have gotten it at school.'

'In other words, you'd stolen some chalk from the school,' she said.

'I had the chalk,' George continued. 'And I remember I'd taken it out of my pocket. I had it in my hand as I came into the square, as I was walking along, and it just seemed that it would be a good idea to write something. It was the way I felt then, that's all. And I felt from the first that all I wanted to write was the word "NO", just that and nothing else. That was enough. And so I did write it, there on the sidewalk in front of Hovey's.'

'What a shame,' Mrs. Sickles murmured indignantly.

'And how about the second time, on the door of the Bank?' asked the doctor.

'That was about the same, but still more on purpose. I'd taken the piece of soap with me on purpose.'

'And tonight, with the paint it was altogether on purpose.'

'Yes.'

'And why?'

'I don't really know. It was just the way I felt again, about everything. Maybe I didn't like the way they'd so easily erased what I wrote the other times.'

'And you thought the paint wouldn't be so easy to erase.'

'Yes.'

'Well, we'll see.' The doctor pursed his lips and hooked his thumbs on the bathrobe sash. 'In short, as I see it,' he said, 'you were simply defacing public and private property for your own amusement. You were deliberately committing a criminal offence. Now tell me: do you expect to be punished?'

'Yes.'

'What do you expect?'

'The strap.'

'Well, you're mistaken. I've decided to let you punish yourself, tomorrow morning. Fortunately it's a Saturday and you're free from school. And I hope that after this we'll have no more trouble from you. What do you think the people in town are going to say? Perhaps you didn't stop to consider the embarrassment this will cause your mother and me.' He paused, as if to let the weighty purport of his remarks achieve their full effect; but George's expression did not change. 'Well, there's nothing more to be done tonight. In the morning you'll know how I've decided to let you punish yourself. Now you can go up to bed.'

'Good night, father,' the boy said, and he started up the stairs.

As he passed his mother at the top and bade her good night also, she said, 'And before you go to sleep you'd as well pray God to forgive you for being such a troublesome boy'.

'Yes, mother.' He went into his room and softly closed the door.

As the parents returned to their bed, Mrs. Sickles complained, 'He might at least have said he was sorry'.

'There wouldn't be any purpose in him saying something he didn't mean,' replied the doctor. 'I'd know, and he knows I'd know.'

'What is the punishment you've decided on?' whispered the woman as she pulled up the covers around them. 'Tell me.'

The doctor pressed a switch, and the room fled into darkness. 'You'll know tomorrow morning,' he said.

The next morning was summer. The sun came up pale in a haze, dragging after it a static mass of heat. It was Saturday morning, as always the busiest of the week. Already before nine o'clock the square was filled with a coming and a going of people and vehicles. However, in the centre of it there was quite a crowd that stayed still, collected around the crimson 'NO' painted on the pavement. But it was not an astonished crowd, such as on the two previous occasions had collected around the place where 'NO' was written; rather it was a crowd that seemed to be waiting. When nine o'clock tolled in brazen rhythm from the belfry of the Baptist Church, the people turned expectantly.

And there came George Sickles, alone. His father and mother stayed behind him on the sidewalk to watch. He was dressed in overalls and he carried with him a quart ginger ale bottle and a handful of rags. As he approached, the crowd drew apart to let him pass, and there were smirks and whispered remarks: 'That's him . . . he's the one who's been writing "NO" all over . . . it's George Sickles . . . he isn't a little loony, is he? . . . fancy anybody thinking of doing things like that . . . and here he is now, right on time, like the sheriff said he'd be . . . poor Doc Sickles must sure have a burden with that boy . . . and what do you think the idea was, writing "NO" all over like that? . . . well, he's a peculiar one all right, and no question about it . . .'

George reached the place where the 'NO' was painted and he knelt down in front of it. Uncorking his bottle, he poured some turpentine from it on to one of the rags and began rubbing at the base of the first vertical of the letter 'N'. Fortunately the paint was not yet quite dry, and it yielded to George's efforts with rag and turpentine, but slowly. The crowd pressed around to watch, snickering. The boy did not appear at all disconcerted by the audience; he worked stolidly and did not look at anyone.

In the crowd there were numbers of boys and girls from the high school, George's classmates. One of the boys called out, 'Tell us, George, what's this "NO" all about?' George didn't answer. 'What's the matter, George? Won't you talk? Won't Georgie tell us why he writes "NO" on the sidewalk?' The girls

began to titter encouragingly. 'Georgie, Georgie, don't you know why you write "NO"? Oh, oh, Georgie, don't you know that "NO" is no thing to go around writing?' The crowd now started to laugh outright, approving the youth.

George's face, as the laughs increased, slowly began to change in colour from its natural white to a darker and darker red. He tried to work more rapidly, but in the hot sun the paint became more and more difficult to remove as he progressed. He was panting and the perspiration ran in little trickles around the back of his neck. In his haste he scraped the skin off the knuckles of his right hand against the pavement; some drops of his blood fell, mixing with the paint he worked to obliterate and indistinguishable from it.

Prompted by the laughs of the crowd, the taunting youth continued: 'Oh, Geo, don't be so slow to clean up that "NO". Next time you'll know better. Why don't you say something, Geo? Maybe the only thing that Geo knows is "NO". Speak to me, Georgie, come on. Or maybe you'd rather sing. I know just the song, too. I know your song, Geo.' And he began to sing the refrain of a song which everyone in the crowd surely knew, a song perennially sung. '*No, no, a thousand times no, I'd rather die than say yes! No, no, a thousand times no, I'd rather die than say yes!*' The crowd knew the song indeed and hilariously took it up, singing with amusement and enthusiasm at the humour of the situation. The singing grew louder and louder. All around the square, people leaned out of windows to look on and laugh. Apparently everyone knew very well what was happening. The song continued, '*No, no, a thousand times no, I'd rather die than say yes!*' The uproar of singing and laughter actually echoed between the sober fronts of the buildings. And the breathless heat of the forenoon increased.

The object of all this derision continued steadily at his task, which was now almost done. But he was obviously not unmoved by the hilarity he caused. His face and neck had flushed scarlet, and his ears seemed literally to pulsate with this evidence of shame. On his cheeks there were tears, or perhaps those drops were merely of sweat. Yet he made no voluntary sign of response. And at last the last trace of red paint had been removed from the pavement; there remained only a few fast-drying spots of turpentine and the little pile of crimson-stained rags. The quart ginger ale

bottle was empty. George stood up slowly, rubbing his knees with both hands; he took the bottle and the soiled rags and walked away.

The crowd parted to let him go, but it moved along for a little distance after him, as far as the edge of the square, still laughing and singing its ridicule, apparently unwilling to relinquish such a sure source of amusement. At the edge of the square the boy turned for a moment and stood confronting those who mocked him. He didn't say a word or even make a perceptible gesture; he simply stood and looked at the crowd, as though his mere regard were reproach enough. But the crowd, far from being discountenanced, was all the more amused and its mirth swelled to a pitch, the song became a roar: '*NO, NO A THOUSAND TIMES NO, I'D RATHER DIE THAN SAY YES!*', accompanied by shrieks of delighted laughter.

George turned away. He walked rapidly, and the crowd did not follow him any longer. He reached a corner and turned, and then he was by himself finally. He began to run, as fast as he could, breathing furiously, his head lowered, and he didn't pause until he reached home, where he rushed at once to the cellar and locked himself in.

The general hilarity in the square diminished little by little and, appeased, the crowd slowly dispersed. One after the other the citizens of Harkton went off about their ordinary business. The windows around the square emptied of spectators. And soon the town had resumed its usual air. During the rest of the day people continued to talk of what had happened, but no one imagined that the incident might not be at an end.

And least of all Dr. Sickles. He was very contented with the success of his punishment; indeed he had not dared to expect that it would be so effective. To be sure, George's reaction had been less than he might have hoped, but he knew that the boy was not ordinarily demonstrative. Since it was Saturday, Dr. Sickles spent only half the day in his office; he spent the rest at home, working in the vegetable garden which he set out every year at the back of his house. George helped him, of course. The two did not speak of what had happened that morning. They spoke at all only when it was necessary in the course of their work. One of Dr. Sickles fast beliefs was that to talk when one had nothing useful to say was a waste; and what was wasteful he could not tolerate.

That evening, before the family went to bed, the doctor locked both front and back doors and took the keys upstairs with him. The father and mother and the son said good night to each other as they always did, dutifully, and retired. The night was warm, clinging; no breeze stirred the air as Harkton relapsed into the silence of its nocturnal torpor.

Always in the morning, on Sunday as well as during the week, Mrs. Sickles rose precisely at a quarter of seven, 'without need of any contraption to warn that it's time', she was fond of proclaiming. She would dress rapidly, then wake her husband, and, as she went downstairs to prepare breakfast, would rap peremptorily on her son's door. The day began with that routine, which was calculated according to her certainties and which never varied.

But on this Sunday morning there was a decided variation. As she came to the bottom of the stairs she stopped, she stared, her two hands involuntarily rose in the air, and she gasped. There, in the centre of the round braided rug that covered the hall floor, the rug which was an heirloom, having been made by her 'poor dear mother with her own hands', there was the word 'NO', written in large letters with white chalk. For the long slow-passing time of an entire minute she stood transfixed, staring, incredulous, as though some optic fault must be deceiving her. But there was no error. She pressed her lips together tight and inhaled slowly through her nose while her nostrils quivered. Without haste she turned and walked determinedly back upstairs, went to her door and threw it open. Dr. Sickles was sitting on the edge of the bed, naked.

Now, in all of the forty-three years that they had been married, the doctor and his wife had never seen each other nude, more or less by tacit agreement. Of the naked body of the other each knew only as much as the sense of touch could convey, and neither apparently had ever desired to know more. But on this morning, startled from her routine by what she had just seen on her rug and returning to the bedroom unexpectedly, Mrs. Sickles for the first time saw a man's complete nakedness. Startled again, precipitated into complete discomposure, she stammered something unintelligible, then turned her face away. The doctor hastily clutched at the bedclothes and pulled them up to cover his nudity. 'What is it?' he asked brusquely. 'What do you want? Why do you come bursting in this way?' He grimaced with displeasure.

'I'm sorry, Edwin,' said the woman. 'But I wanted to tell you that that boy has written "NO" in chalk on the rug at the foot of the stairs.'

For a moment the doctor didn't answer; his grimace became a frown. Then he said, 'If you'll wait outside one minute, I'll put something on. I'll be right there.'

His wife closed the door and waited in the narrow hall. When the doctor came out, he was dressed in his bathrobe and slippers. Without speaking, he went downstairs and stood looking at the large white 'NO' written there against the darker colours of the rug. He stooped and touched the 'N' with one finger; a tiny cloud of chalk dust arose. 'I'll have the boy clean this off immediately,' he said.

'Oh, I'd rather do it myself,' protested Mrs. Sickles at once. 'He'd be sure to make a mess of it. And besides, the last time you let him off with just cleaning up what he'd done, the lesson didn't have much effect, to judge by this. Maybe this time you'd better think of something a bit more practical, if you know what I mean.' And she went off toward the kitchen.

The doctor frowned more than ever, but he didn't answer. He turned, walked back up the stairs, and entered his son's bedroom without knocking.

George sat fully clothed on the bed in his small unornamented room. His hair was mussed and his face had a pinched and rather feverish look, which might have been the result either of anxiety or sleeplessness. He didn't stand up when his father came in, which was unusual.

'Go fetch the strap,' ordered Dr. Sickles.

The boy stood up then and went to do as he was told. 'The strap' was kept in a small tool-shed behind the house; it was a long heavy black leather thong, which had obviously at one time been part of a horse's harness, studded all along at intervals of a few inches with tiny decorative brass knobs. It was the instrument of physical punishment habitually used upon George, though in the past he had seldom given provocation for its use. And always hitherto the scene of such punishment had been the shed, where he was obliged to bend over an old sawhorse while his father vigorously applied the strap several times to the seat of his trousers. This time, apparently, there was to be a difference.

When he re-entered the room, his father calmly took the strap

from him and said, 'Close the window. I don't want the neighbours to hear this,' which was surprising, because it had always before been conspicuous that, when he was beaten, George never made any outcry.

The window was pulled down. 'Now undress,' said Dr. Sickles. For a moment there was no response. The boy stared in silence at the man, as though he had not heard. 'Undress!' Dr. Sickles repeated tersely. George obeyed, and when he stood stripped before his father, the latter said, as he swung the heavy length of the strap tentatively in one hand, 'Now go and stand against the wall, and remember that this is for your own good'.

In the kitchen below, as she went from the cupboard to the table, Mrs. Sickles heard the first blow of leather against flesh, and her whole body replied to the sound with a shiver that transfixed her where she stood, with her fingertips poised tensely against the table. At each successive stroke something shuddered, pulsing, all through her, her whole face twitched, and her breathing became more and more irregular. Suddenly from upstairs came the first trembling shriek of pain, followed by others. With a hoarse gasp Mrs. Sickles relaxed, everything about her abruptly went limp. She sat down and leaned against the table, panting; her mouth hung open loosely and her eyes focused upon nothing.

Then the shrieks ceased. It was quiet throughout the house with a strange and consuming quietness.

By the time Dr. Sickles was dressed and shaved and downstairs, his wife was busy at the stove, cooking buckwheat cakes. 'Ah, this smells good,' said the doctor heartily, taking his familiar place at the dining-room table. Before eating he sat for a minute and methodically snapped the joints of the fingers of both hands, as was his habit.

A little while later George came down. In one hand he purposefully carried the strap, which he took back to its customary place in the shed. Then he returned to have his breakfast. He didn't say anything; no one of the three spoke. The boy sat gingerly straight on the very edge of his chair and ate little, and what he ate he ate fast. He was finished well ahead of the other two, who had started before him. 'Excuse me, please,' he said, getting up from the table.

'You'd better go and get yourself ready for church,' said Mrs. Sickles.

'If you don't mind,' George said slowly, 'I'd like to be excused from church today. I don't feel much like it.'

'Nonsense!' exclaimed his mother indignantly. 'Excused indeed! You'll be nothing of the kind. Now go upstairs this minute and get on your black suit. You haven't been to church often enough, that's one thing wrong with you.'

The boy nodded and went out.

Before the family left to go to church, Mrs. Sickles had time to clean the chalk off the rug, which afterwards appeared just as ever. Nevertheless she proclaimed, 'That rug will never be the same again, because I'll never be able to look at it without thinking of that word there in the middle of it'. So saying, she gave an upward glance of earthly resignation and carefully drew on her black net gloves. And then the father and the mother and the son, all three dressed in black, decorously departed to go to church.

The Baptist Church of Harkton was painted a medium brown on the outside and the interior was all bright amber. The pews and the walls and the Gothic-raftered ceiling were of blond maple, highly varnished and shiny. The six square windows on either side were set with translucent amber glass, which gave the interior an effect of perpetual garish sunlight. The chancel was merely a raised platform with a pulpit and a reading desk and three Gothic chairs upholstered in brilliant purple. To one side was a bench for the choir and a foot-pedal harmonium. Down the centre aisle stretched a vivid scarlet carpet.

The habitual and designated pew of the Sickles family was well toward the front, only three rows behind the pew of Elias Turner. There on this particular Sunday sat Dr. and Mrs. Sickles, their son George, their daughter Edwina, her husband Calvin Sutter, and the two Sutter children, Martha and Calvin, Jr. There they sat in silence waiting for the service to begin. George squirmed uneasily on the straight-backed wooden bench, grimacing his discomfort. His mother nudged him with her sharp bony elbow and frowned reproof. He sighed.

At last the service started, and it was very long. The topic of the sermon was, as it not infrequently happened to be, 'The blessed state of the harmonious community living in the sight of Our Lord'. The Reverend Mr. Willowby spoke crisply, fixing his congregation with an austere regard; his voice rose and sank in

calculated emphasis, like a ship in the ocean swell. His thin long forefinger was often raised in admonishment. 'I will mince no words,' he declared, 'in my determination to strive ever onward with this flock toward Righteousness. But at least we can be thankful, we can lift up our hearts in thanks that we are on the right road. Though our steps may sometimes err, we know the only way. And it is not the easy way, it is not, oh no, it can never be the way of vain pleasure. We must humbly bow our heads before the suffering which is meted out to us. Those who righteously endure will be thrice blessed. Ah, indeed the peace of the soul is not something easily come by.' He clasped his hands in front of him, looked for a moment toward the rafters and then at the congregation once more, where all attention duly awaited his next utterance.

Or almost all attention. George Sickles seemed not to be able to sit still. He twisted and shifted his position on the bench constantly, and his grimaces and half-repressed sighs suggested not only pain but impatience. Mrs. Sickles nudged him, as she had done already at least a dozen times, and gave him another furious look. Some of the people sitting in nearby pews observed that all was not harmoniousness in the Sickles family, and they glanced briefly at each other with brows knowingly arched.

Finally the sermon reached its end. 'And so may the Lord, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, look down upon our transgressions and find it in His heart to forgive them, as we forgive our transgressors. And in turn may we, His servants, become ever more worthy to glorify His name as we strive onward with certainty toward Righteousness. Amen.' Then, after a time of contemplative silence, there was a prayer, a hymn, there was an announcement of church-sponsored events for the coming week, there was an anthem (*A Beautiful City Is Zion*) sung by the choir, during which the collection was received, there was a prayer of benediction, and at last there was the recessional hymn, during which the choir got up and slowly filed out.

After the service it was customary for the pastor to greet the members of his congregation in the vestibule as they departed. As the Sickles family passed he remarked, without smiling, 'Seems George was a little restless this morning'.

'He didn't sleep very well,' said Mrs. Sickles hastily. Then, after a moment's hesitation, she added, lowering her voice, 'Perhaps,

pastor, you might have a talk with the boy some afternoon if he comes around to the manse'.

'Why, of course,' replied the pastor. 'You know how glad I always am to be of service when I can.'

Then the Sickles family moved along outside and started walking home. It was tradition in the family that Edwina and her husband and children take Sunday dinner with her parents. And there they went, seeming certainly a proper family: the grandfather and grandmother, the son and the daughter, the son-in-law, and the two grandchildren. Martha Sickles Sutter, the granddaughter, was a strong fair-haired young girl, only a year and some months younger than her Uncle George, a fact which she seemed to find ceaselessly amusing. Calvin Cawley Sutter, Jr., the grandson, was eleven, but he had already begun to resemble his father in more than name; he had a round stolid young face, straight sandy hair, and he was plump.

They all walked for a while without speaking in the full heat of the Sunday noon. Then Martha Sutter said, 'Uncle George sure was fidgety in church. Maybe he was just itching to write "NO" again somewhere the way he did in the square. Were you, George?' She giggled maliciously.

'Hush up that talk right now,' said her mother.

'Sure is a fine day today,' remarked Calvin Sutter. 'Summer's getting off to an early start this year. Ought to have good crops if it's not too dry.' Calvin was Harkton's insurance agent.

'Yes, it's a fine day,' affirmed Dr. Sickles, glancing with professional casualness at the cloudless sky. 'We'll have it fine for several days now.'

Sunday dinner at the Sickleses, being a family tradition, was always lengthy. On this particular Sunday, before the dinner was quite ready, George went into the kitchen, which was contrary to all practice.

'Dinner's not ready yet,' announced his mother tartly.

'I know,' said George. He looked uncomfortably at his sister and his niece, who smirked. 'But I was wondering if I could have a little something to eat here in the kitchen instead of sitting at the table.'

Abruptly an appalled and appalling silence emptied the kitchen of its ordinary sounds. The two women and the girl stared at George in paralysed astonishment, almost in alarm. Mrs. Sickles

was the first to regain her aplomb. 'And why, may I ask,' she said coldly, 'shouldn't you eat in the dining room along with everybody else?'

'You know,' George murmured. 'It's just that I don't feel very much like it.'

'The same way you didn't feel like sitting still this morning in church and embarrassed me there in front of everybody,' retorted his mother. 'Ridiculous. You'll not be pampered in this house, and you'd better realize it. Either you eat in the dining room like everybody else or you don't eat, and we'll have no more talk.'

Edwina Sutter vigorously nodded approval of her mother. Young Martha snickered audibly.

George did not reply at once. He stood still, looking at his mother, while his mouth grew thin and his face gradually suffused with dark red. His hands clenched into fists. He inhaled loudly. At last he blurted, 'All right then. All right, I won't eat at all. I'd rather go hungry. I'd much rather go hungry.' He strode to the kitchen door, wrenched it open violently, and went out, slamming it behind him so hard that it didn't catch properly and jumped open again. He disappeared without a backward look around the corner of the house.

Mrs. Sickles went at once to tell her husband what had happened. 'We're in for a lot of trouble with that boy,' she concluded bleakly.

'Time will tell,' said the doctor. 'At any rate, he'll be sure to come back when he gets hungry. And then we'll see. In the meantime, there's nothing to do but carry on just as usual. Is the dinner ready?'

'It won't be long.'

And, tradition prevailing, the Sickleses' Sunday dinner took place as usual. George's plate was removed, his chair put to one side, and no one spoke of him. The doctor and his son-in-law talked at length of Harkton's future commercial possibilities, the Sutter children chattered pointlessly, surveyed by their mother, and Mrs. Sickles came and went with heaped platters. After dinner the family went and sat in the small parlour until Calvin Sutter, towards three o'clock, said, 'I guess we'd better be getting along'. For, if it was tradition that the Sutters have Sunday dinner with the Sickleses, it was equally tradition that they have Sunday supper with Calvin's father, old Augustus Sutter. And hence they departed.

'I hope everything will be all right with George,' Edwina whispered to her mother at the door.

Mrs. Sickles raised both hands, as in a gesture of disavowal. 'I don't know,' she said. 'It's the boy's responsibility, not mine. It's up to him.'

Left alone, the doctor and his wife had their separate occupations. She busied herself upstairs with her needlework, while he remained alone in the parlour, re-reading his already well-read copy of Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*. The afternoon thus gradually waned, in silence. Outside it was sultry. A layer of colourless cloud came up from the south and slowly filled the sky, covering the sun.

When it was time for supper, George had not yet come back. 'I suppose he *will* come, sooner or later,' said Mrs. Sickles.

'Of course,' said the doctor, tucking an end of his napkin into the space between two buttons of his vest. 'Where else do you think he could go?'

Daylight dwindled, little by little. Dark began spreading over upon the heat of the town. In the hush an uneasy wind suddenly started. And afar in the coming night now and then throbbed a sound of thunder.

At nine-thirty George still had not come. 'It's time for bed now,' said Dr. Sickles. He went and locked the front and back doors and one by one turned off the electric lights. 'The boy knows what time we go to bed. Maybe if he has to spend all the night out alone, it will do something to sober him a little.'

'He has his best suit on,' said Mrs. Sickles as they went up the stairs together.

'That can't be helped,' replied the doctor imperturbably, yawning.

During the night the heat did not diminish. It pressed close and heavy about the town, and the distant thunder continued. But it didn't rain. All stayed still, clutched in the exhausting warmth. The blackness was unmitigated.

In the morning it was only a few minutes past six when the doctor and his wife were awakened by a persistent clanging clang clang of their front door bell. The doctor went to the window and looked down. Below stood the sheriff. 'I'll be right down,' said Dr. Sickles grimly. In the room, as he put on his

slippers and bathrobe, he said to his wife, 'It's the sheriff again. It must be something about George.'

'I told you we were going to have trouble with that boy,' she exclaimed.

The sheriff did not come inside the doorway as the doctor opened for him. 'Awful sorry to have to disturb you again this way, doctor,' he began. 'But I got the call from old Elias Turner himself.'

Dr. Sickles gritted his teeth. 'I suppose it's the boy again,' he said. 'Has he been writing "NO" again? Where this time?'

'It's pretty serious this time,' replied the sheriff. 'It's not only in one place. It's all over the town. He must have used a rock to scratch on the glass with. It's on the front door of the Bank again, and on the plate glass windows of Hovey's, and Miller's Pharmacy, and Anderson's Grocery, and half a dozen other stores. The letters are furrowed right into the glass, so that they'll never come out. And the worst of all is the Church. He must have had a knife with him, because the word "NO" is carved in letters a foot high right on the front door.'

The doctor gasped, closed his eyes a moment, and inhaled very slowly. Then he said, 'The boy isn't here, sheriff. He hasn't been here since yesterday noon. You can come in and look if you want to.'

'No, no, doctor, if you say he isn't here, that's good enough for me. Do you know where he might be? This is a pretty serious thing now. It's not a joke any more, and I'm afraid we're going to have to take some sort of action. Where do you think we might find him?'

'I'm not sure,' replied the doctor. 'But I know that he often goes for walks in a grove out east of town where there's a stream. He might be there. I hope you find him. But if you do, don't bring him here, above all. Take him to the gaol, where he belongs.'

'I'm afraid we'll have to,' said the sheriff. He shook his head. 'It's too bad.'

'It's the boy's own fault,' said the doctor.

Just as his father had suspected, George had taken refuge in that little wood which, for no apparent reason, stretched some distance along a wide shallow stream east of Harkton. He sat on the ground leaning against a tree-trunk by the stream's bank. He sat still there, watching the water as it rushed in numberless tiny cascades over

the rocks. His clothes were rumpled, they had lost all shape, one sleeve of the jacket had got torn somehow. His hair hung straight down above his eyes, damp. In his outward appearance everything was certainly hapless and forlorn, yet he seemed to be quite placid nevertheless. An aura of dreamlike tranquillity enveloped him. When the sheriff and his deputy came tramping along irritably through the woods, looking for him, he did not even try to flee. He went with them, and they took him to the gaol in the cellar of the city hall.

There was no one in Harkton to dispute that George Sickles was undoubtedly more than just a public nuisance, though he was perhaps not a serious menace to the community. Some said that he must be insane and 'ought to be sent to the State loony bin,' an imputation which Dr. Sickles, when he heard it, angrily and vehemently denied. The whole town talked intensely of what should be done with the prisoner. But the process of municipal law-enforcement, once started, pursued its own preordained course.

Two days after his arrest George was driven by the sheriff to Granville, where he was lodged in a cell of the county gaol. After ten additional days of waiting there was a hearing. It was brief. An uninterested judge posed questions to those concerned, noted the sternness of the boy's parents, noted the apparent general opinion of Harkton's citizens, noted the boy's unwavering calm, and, 'after due consideration, for the boy's own good,' sentenced George Sickles to serve eighteen months in the State reform school.

For several weeks thereafter Harkton talked very much of the Sickles affair. Everyone approved when Dr. Sickles paid to have all of the defaced plate-glass replaced and bought a fine new door for the church. But the doctor and his wife, people noticed, had suffered from all that had happened; both looked older and weary. The town, even as it pointed at them and whispered, sympathized. And then, as the weeks became months, other subjects of conversation came to the public attention and the Sickles affair began to be forgotten.

At the State reform school, far far away from Harkton, farther than he had ever been before in his life, George did not seem to be unhappy. He was assigned to work in the institution's laundry, where he worked well and did as he was told. He gave no

trouble. The authorities left him alone. During his few periods of free time he read and re-read a book which he had borrowed from the reform school library—*Gulliver's Travels*. Once every two weeks he was allowed to go to the movies which were shown in the dining-hall. He did not make any particular friends among the other boys, either in the dormitory or at the laundry, but he was companionable with them. He received no messages from outside the institution and he sent none.

It was when George had been at the reform school for almost a year that both his parents suddenly died, within nine hours of each other: the doctor from a complicated thrombotic condition, and Mrs. Sickles as the result of a heart attack she suffered while hurrying out of the house to call for help for her husband, who lay in agony upstairs. George was told that he might be granted special permission to attend the funeral, but he declined to go, explaining that for him his parents had been dead a long time. This the authorities considered evidence of a callousness they had not previously observed in the boy.

In time he received two letters, one from his sister, the other from Douglas G. Foss, Harkton's lawyer. His sister wrote not to express an appropriate grief nor to commiserate, but to say how sure she felt that their parents' death had been hastened by the shame George had brought upon them. She added that Calvin Sutter had been offered a more important agency in another part of the State by the insurance company he represented. Thus she and her family would very soon be leaving Harkton, nor need George ever expect, she stated, after he was released from reform school, to receive any sort of support from her or her husband, even if he should find out where they were and follow them. His sister told him that he had been disinherited by his father and mother, and that she considered she no longer had any family obligations toward him. 'In spite of all the difficulty and sorrow you have caused,' the letter concluded, 'I don't let myself feel any ill-will toward you and I hope you may still be able to make a decent respectable life for yourself.' The lawyer's letter was very brief and formal, merely serving to confirm that George had indeed been disinherited and to state that he had no possible claim, present or future, to any portion of his parents' joint estate, which was left entirely to his sister.

He read both the letters twice and then tore them up.

At the time of Dr. and Mrs. Sickles's death and the moving away of the Sutter family Harkton's attention again for a while dwelt upon memories of the 'affair', but not for very long. There were other things. There was a rather serious drought in the region. It was June, and some of the young people were marrying. There was the high-school graduation. There were all the usual things. Life in the town continued without remarkable events. It was summer and the weeks went by in the heat.

And anon, the summer months one after the other passed. The drought turned out, after all, not to be serious. The intenseness of the heat by degrees abated. Around in the surrounding country there were the annual harvests; the crops were good. School began once more. Imperceptibly the days, each one a little more and a little more, grew shorter. Autumn matured, passed its full moment quickly, and aged toward winter. Frost came. The leaves fell and blew away or were burned in smoky fires at dusk. The town prepared itself, living in expectation of the cold and the ice soon to come. Then there was the first snow; it came drifting gently in late November, swirling across the plains, and tenderly but implacably possessed the town. It was winter now, and Harkton's attention turned upon the winter.

Then something astonishing happened. George Sickles came back. Almost no one in recent months had spoken of him, and those who had had spoken of him as of something past, a matter permanently settled, as they might have spoken of the dead. Perhaps it was even more astonishing than his return in itself that no one should have anticipated it; but such was the fact. Why had he come back here? people asked each other. He simply appeared one day in the square, and the passers stared at him.

But he was not the same George Sickles as before, which was doubtless all the more disturbing. There was a change in him. It was, to be sure, a quite banal change, one to have been expected. George was no longer a boy. He was taller than before, and broader, and he obviously shaved now; and there was a sure new air of strength about him. The citizens of Harkton regarded this change at first with surprise and then with mistrust, because it had come about not only in a foreign place, but in a place and under circumstances which they all united to consider reprobate. No one greeted George back to his native town.

He did not appear at all distressed by this, however. He rented

a small drab furnished room, near the old railway station, in a boarding-house frequented principally by truck drivers. And he set out to find some employment, but without success. Everywhere he applied he was brusquely refused. As the days passed and his bill in the boarding-house increased, he still had no work.

Seeing him again, the town naturally remembered what had happened a year and a half before. People talked, and speculated, and wondered how long it would be before he would be making trouble again. Since he could find no work George spent most of the day standing around in the square, though it was very cold. He didn't speak to anyone but he looked at the people one by one as they passed. The people were annoyed by his staring, they didn't know what to make of it, and they complained to each other. They all agreed that no good could possibly come of his return to Harkton. Sooner or later, they said, something unfortunate was bound to happen; and it would probably be sooner than later. And they were right.

It was a chill windy night toward the middle of December. George had been back for a week. Harkton, beneath its layers of snow and ice, lay quiet. From the belfry of the Baptist Church had just sounded ten o'clock, chiming vibrant upon the frigid air. Around the square the street lights made isolated spheres of white still desolation. Nothing moved.

By chance that night it happened that the sheriff was working late in his office, as he often did near the end of the year, bringing up to date his annual record. He finished his work for the evening at a quarter after ten, got into his heavy sheepskin coat, his cap, his boots, and his mittens, and set out for home. But as he crossed the square, to his amazement, he saw someone coming from the other side. It was George Sickles. He had on an old wool mackinaw, but no boots, no gloves, no hat. The sheriff stopped, but George kept on, did not look at the sheriff, and would have passed without speaking.

'Where do you think you're going?' asked the sheriff.

George started. He glanced at the sheriff. 'I've been for a walk,' he answered.

'A walk!' grunted the sheriff dubiously. 'I can imagine you'd be going for a walk this night, dressed like you are. I'll bet you didn't expect to meet me, did you? You wouldn't be up to your

old tricks, would you? Do you really expect me to believe you were out for a walk?’

‘It doesn’t matter whether you believe it or not,’ said George, shrugging.

The sheriff stepped forward and put a firm hand on George’s shoulder. ‘Now look here, son,’ he began, ‘you . . .’

‘Take your hands off me!’ George exclaimed, interrupting. He shook away the sheriff’s hand and stepped back several paces. ‘Leave me alone. I haven’t done anything, and I don’t like people touching me.’

‘Is that so?’ retorted the sheriff angrily, moving forward with his hand still outstretched. ‘You’re getting a little too fresh.’

George backed away again. The sheriff lunged forward, started to run. But George was quicker and more agile, unhampered by a heavy coat or boots. He raced to the other side of the square and along the side-walk toward the corner, with the sheriff pursuing him. He was well ahead and might have gotten away with ease; but again he was unlucky.

It was obvious that the sheriff was being out-distanced and that for him to continue the chase would be futile. Panting, he stopped as he reached the side-walk. He frowned angrily. Putting both hands up to his mouth, he shouted, ‘Stop or I’ll shoot!’

The fugitive did not stop. He was passing just in front of the Bank. As the sheriff’s threat reached him through the freezing air he swerved abruptly to the side. And one of his feet came down on a little stretch of smooth ice. He lost his balance. His arms flew up, but he could not save himself. He fell swiftly backward and to one side and came down with a splitting impact against the Bank’s massive granite steps. He uttered one cry; the sound of it pierced the icy quiet for but an instant. Then his body lay still, sprawled there.

Hurrying forward, the sheriff saw that he did not stir, his eyes were shut; but he was breathing. With difficulty he managed to get the inert body to his office. He telephoned to Dr. Carsby to come at once.

Some whiffs of spirits of ammonia sufficed to revive George, yet he still did not move or speak. He lay motionless on the floor and looked at the two men who stood above him. They spoke to him and impatiently told him to get up, but he simply lay there blinking. After a brief examination the doctor decided that the

boy must have injured his spine in the fall and be temporarily paralysed. There was nothing to do but get him to the hospital in Granville. After telephoning their respective wives to inform them of the accident and the ensuing necessary trip, the two men got George on to the back seat of the doctor's car and drove to Granville.

At the hospital there the doctor's diagnosis was confirmed. It would be necessary for George to remain for observation. The sheriff and the doctor departed.

Several days later, after numerous X-rays, a complete diagnosis of George's condition was concluded. His injury was not great, yet it was very grave. Recovery *was* possible, but only by means of an operation and subsequent special treatment. However, the operation was so difficult and delicate a one that no local surgeon would ever have dared to attempt it, and the special treatment was so costly that certainly no facilities for it existed any nearer than Chicago. If the operation and treatment were not possible, as indeed the Granville hospital staff expected from the first, then the only recourse would be to a limited and old-fashioned therapy, which, though in time it might effect some improvement, would doubtless leave the patient totally paralysed for life.

Such were the facts which the doctor in charge of George's case wrote to his sister, whose address had been supplied by the sheriff. Edwina Sutter's reply came forthwith: she regretted to learn of her brother's accident, but she was certainly in no position to undertake extravagant expenditures on his behalf.

Consequently, after a delay of a week or more, George was transferred as a charity case to the county home for the destitute, a huge old frame building on the outskirts of Granville. He was then not quite twenty years old.

In Harkton, when they learned what had happened, the people said that it was too bad. But such accidents had a way of happening. And they had all known from the beginning that things were bound to turn out badly for George Sickles. They repeated to each other the facts of the affair as evidence that they had been right. It had been fatal, they said. And no one disputed that indeed things had turned out badly.

At the county home in Granville George was one of thirty men, all of the others aged and feeble, who occupied a long corridor-like bare-walled ward. There the years passed by him.



FRANCIS BACON

Three studies for figures at the base of a crucifixion. 1945 (*Private Collection*)



Painting. 1946

(Collection Museum of Modern Art, New York)

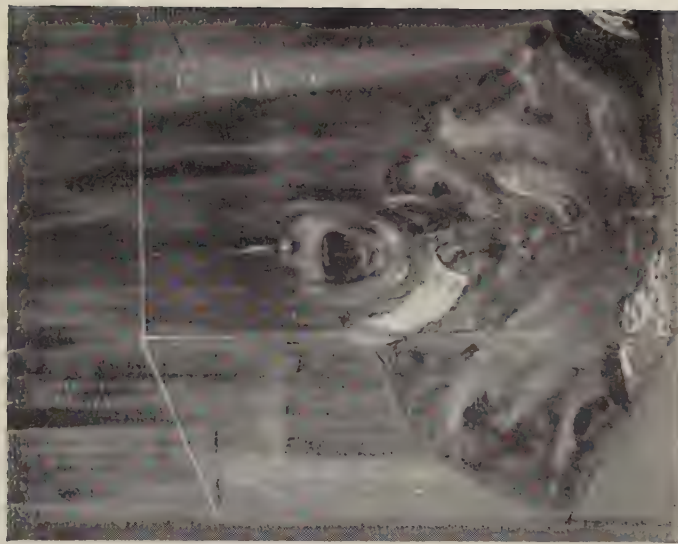


Head. 1949

(Collection Wright Ludington)



Figure with monkey. 1949



Head. 1949



Study for a portrait. 1949



Study for a figure. 1949

He grew thin, grew gaunt, his hair turned a drab colour and began falling out. He couldn't move or speak; everything had to be done for him. Often the other occupants of the ward, in their senility, made fun of him. He had no visitors. He had no distractions. On fine days occasionally he was rolled in a rickety wheel chair out on to a veranda in the sun. There he would sit, twitching a little, and at times his head would jerk spasmodically from side to side as though in a gesture of indomitable dissent.

ROBERT MELVILLE

FRANCIS BACON

WHEN I was still in standard IV at an elementary school I read a single instalment of a serial story in another boy's magazine, and although I recall only the last two or three sentences they have affected my whole life. A frightened man was crawling on his hands and knees along a dark tunnel; suddenly, in front of him, something gave off a soft, greenish glow. He stretched out his hand either to touch it or to ward it off, and the episode ended in these words: 'Now it glowed on the tips of his fingers. It was luminous paint!' I had never heard of such a thing: it introduced me to an inexplicable order of tangibility, and it gave me the first of my 'giddy turns', for the dark tunnel, the man's fear and the exclamation mark combined with my ignorance to transform luminous paint into a kind of live but phantasmal tissue.

Several years ago, when I saw the name of a magazine, *La Révolution Surréaliste*, light up in a dark room and appear to print itself on the air, I was pleased but not shaken; it was the merest graph of what I understood by luminous paint. My 'real thing' gave off energies not to be found in the commercial product that goes by the same name.

At widely separated intervals, I have been confronted by two pictures whose *matière* had exactly the same vertiginous effect upon me as the uncanny aeruginous substance that I found in the tunnel. One of them was Cézanne's 'Boy in a Red Waistcoat', in a Swiss collection; the other was a picture of cypresses, brought over from Holland for the big Van Gogh show, before which I

found myself preparing to slip between the grooves of its wonderful black-green paint, in the way that one teeters before entering a revolving door. The images meant nothing to me; the cypresses were commonplace, and even the boy in the red waistcoat seemed an inert object on which the paint had settled. But throughout the present year I have seen seven or eight new paintings by Francis Bacon in which the image has a call upon the entire oblong of paint, and the paint is the sacred substance of the tunnel.

I may yet have to admit that the factors in my make-up which predispose me to an uncritical acceptance of Bacon's pictures of men and curtains are too strong to allow validity to any attempt on my part to make an objective assessment of their place in contemporary painting. In front of these pictures, which are the colour of wet, black snakes lightly powdered with dust, which use small white arrows and safety pins as exclamation marks, and which manifest so eerie a collusion between man and curtain that the paint seems the issue of their interpenetration, I have a desire to feel the rich grey *matière* on my hands, but above all I feel at home in their atmosphere, I feel that 'nothing is missing'. All the same, the purpose of this note is to show that Bacon's pictures not only exist in the same sphere of feeling as Picasso's analytical cubism and Duchamp's futurism, but rectify an anomaly in their language.

The direction and accentuation of his temperament, which leads him to propound an hallucinatory condition as a primary attribute of man, recalls Dostoevsky and Kafka; but in terms of visual association the parallels that propose themselves come from the silent cinema. The obsolete technique of acting in silent films—its system of explanatory gestures and facial movements—now seems like the badly concealed agitation of the actors themselves, breaking through the parts they play: in retrospect, the wooden gestures and grimaces of Edna Purviance, and the blood, the crumpled pince-nez and the soundless scream of the woman shot through the eye in Eisenstein's 'Odessa Steps' sequence seem involuntary disclosures of the soul's maladies. In the period when American films were making their first noises, the silent technique was consciously exploited and perfected in the Bunuel-Dali film, *Un Chien Andalou*, to afford, in the words of Palinurus, who attended its première in 1929, a 'glimpse of the fires of despair and

enzy which were smouldering beneath the complacent post-war world'.

I believe that *Un Chien Andalou* has greater visual force and lucidity than anything achieved in the art of painting between the two wars, and that only the recent paintings of Francis Bacon have discovered a comparable means of disclosing the human condition, or are capable of producing—to quote Palinurus again—the same 'tremendous feeling of excitement and liberation'.

Every activity in these paintings of men going in and out of curtains, or imprisoned in transparent boxes, has an air of extreme hazard, and this powerful overtone obscures the modernity of Bacon's formal resources. He is probably the only important painter of our time who is exclusively preoccupied with man, and his innate tendency to comment upon and expose the state of the human soul—which relates him to Goya, Daumier and Toulouse-Lautrec—is the incalculable factor in his readjustment of cubist seeing.

He is as much concerned with the ambiguity of the boundaries of figures in space as Picasso in his analytical cubist pictures, and is as much concerned with the further ambiguity of the boundaries of figures when in motion as Duchamp in 'Nu descendant un escalier' and 'Le Roi et la Reine traversés par de Nus vites'. He shares their sense of fluctuating depth and undelimited form, but not their mode of presentation. Picasso and Duchamp expressed his conception of reality in elaborate linear structures; Bacon expresses it, with more congruity, in painterly terms, for it is essentially an augmentation of baroque notions about appearance.

Picasso and Duchamp imposed upon themselves the task of exploring the indefinite and the immediate with a linear system that could only resort to fragmentation. This is not a criticism. Their pictures made between 1910 and 1912 are far and away the most beautiful and moving achievements of twentieth-century painting, but their facets and multiple planes form a complex, difficult, and, for most people, excessively mandarin language. They must have been aware of some anomaly in their approach, for both artists abandoned their systems; yet, strictly speaking, there have been no new developments in painting since that time; the concept has been weakened and misunderstood, it has not been superseded.

At one moment, Tchelitchev seemed on the point of realizing

that a painterly system was the logical next step. His 'Nude in Space', painted in 1926, brilliantly fuses two views of a figure with uneven thicknesses of paint, and it is probable that Bacon has taken a hint from this quarter. Then again, in 1939, Matta clearly felt that the frustrations of modernism were located in the linear method. But he achieved only a painterly fragmentation and somehow failed to perceive that Picasso and Duchamp were making statements about exterior reality. Mabilie would have us believe that Matta is a realist, but a painter can only become a realist through a study of forms in space, and Matta's romantic evocations of a scientifically discovered world invisible to the naked eye are in fact phantasies.

Bacon never makes a drawing. He starts a picture with a loaded one-inch brush of the kind that ironmongers stock, and almost the entire work is painted with such brushes. In these broad brush-strokes, modernism has found its skin: the 'works' no longer show.

It isn't, of course, a simple matter of doing cubism over again, with thick brushes instead of thin ones. In releasing modern painting from the machinery of linear construction, Bacon makes a typically baroque statement: he gives reality to an illusion, and his pictures do not invite the spectator to investigate the means.

The hole of a screaming mouth is sometimes the point of deepest recession in these pictures; or a little white arrow floats in front of the canvas and the rest of the picture starts at a depth which the eye judges to be *behind* the canvas; the canvas is thus rendered non-existent. But nothing can enter Bacon's pictures and remain abstract, and a small thing—an arrow or a safety pin—is anything but unassuming in a world of large, undetailed forms. It is like a fly in a prison cell. It assumes the proportions of a Visitor, or a Familiar, or even a Warder. The fact that nothing will be discovered about it increases its reality.

A man turns his head and stares out of a picture through pince-nez; I am more conscious of the stare than of the eyes; the play of intervals between the eyes, the rims of the glasses and the shadows of the rims is further information about the stare—the man is 'holding something back'; I do not think about spatial concepts when examining the relationship between head and curtain—I am too subdued by the fact that the curtain is sucking away the substance of the head; the subtle pinkish beige paint that

ubbles and creates the face is an exquisite foil to the greys, but how did this man come to get a skin of such a disquieting texture? cannot divorce the facture from what it forms. I am prevented from going through my usual routine of art appreciation. Modern painting has suddenly been humanized.

Bacon is not making it any easier to paint pictures. His known works are few in number because he is compelled to destroy many canvases. When he works on a canvas, intellect, feeling, automatism and chance, in proportions which he will never be able to calculate in advance, sometimes come to an agreement. During the last twelve months these agreements have been more frequent; therein lies a hope for painting.

MAURICE BLANCHOT

MARQUIS DE SADE

La Nouvelle Justine ou les Malheurs de la Vertu, suivi de l'Histoire de Juliette sa sœur appeared in Holland a hundred and fifty years ago. It was a monumental work of nearly four thousand pages. The author had rewritten it several times, thereby greatly increasing its size. Overwhelming and almost endless, it immediately threw the world into a panic. If there is an inferno in every library it is for such a book. We may as well admit that no literature of any epoch has ever produced so outrageous a work and no other volume has ever wounded people's thoughts and feelings more deeply. In our age, which shudders at Henry Miller, who would dare to compete in licence with Sade? Yes, we can safely say that here we have the most scandalous book that has ever been written, and surely this is a reason for taking an interest in it. Here we have a chance of getting to know a work that marks a limit beyond which no writer has ever dared to venture. And so, in some sense, in the world of literature whose values are so relative, we have a true absolute and yet we do not ask it what it has to teach us. It never occurs to us to ask why it is so absolute, what makes it so overwhelming, and eternally more than men can bear. This is a strange example of neglect. And yet it may well be that the very thoroughness of the outrage arises from just this neglect. If we consider the safeguards history has taken to turn Sade into an enormous enigma:

if we think of his twenty-seven years of prison, of his confined and ostracized existence, and consider how this segregation affected not only the life of the man but also his posthumous existence so that the ban on his work seems to condemn him, as though still alive, to eternal imprisonment: then we may well wonder whether the censors and the judges who claim to have immured Sade are not really in his service, are not in fact fulfilling the liveliest wish of his libertinism. For Sade always longed for the solitude of the earth's entrails, for the mysteries of a hidden and solitary life. Time after time he formulated the idea that men's greatest excesses demand secrecy, the darkness of the pit and the inviolable solitude of the cell. Now, strange to say, by banning him to loneliness the guardians of morality have become the accomplices of his worst immorality. It was his mother-in-law, the prudish Madame de Montreuil, who turned his life into a masterpiece of infamy and debauch when she gave it a prison for its setting. And similarly, if a hundred and fifty years later *Justine and Juliette* still seems the most outrageous book that can ever be read, this is because it is almost impossible to read it. With the help of author, publisher and Universal Morality, all measures have been taken to ensure that it remains secret, absolutely unreadable as much for its length, style and repetitiveness as for its furious indecency which would, in any case, have hurried it to the librarian's hell.

It is an outrageous book because it is hard to get at and cannot be made public. But it is also a book that proves there is no outrage where there is no respect, and that where the outrage is immense the respect is proportionate. Who is more respected than Sade? Even today many people still believe they would only need to have this accursed work in their hands for a few minutes to make Rousseau's boast—that any virgin who reads a single page of it will be undone—come true. Certainly such respect is a trophy for a literature and a civilization. And so we can hardly resist a longing to whisper to all his present and future critics and editors: When dealing with Sade, at least be respectful to the outrage.

Fortunately Sade holds his own very well. Not only his work, but his thought remain impenetrable—and this although he develops numerous theories, repeats them with disconcerting patience, and reasons with great clarity and very adequate logic. He is a passionate lover of systems. He expounds, he affirms, he

proves. A hundred times he goes back to the same problem (a hundred times is putting it mildly) and examines every facet; he weighs all the objections, answers them, finds others and answers these. And as what he says is generally rather simple, and as his language, though prolific, is precise and firm, it seems that nothing should be easier than understanding the ideology which, in his case, is inseparable from his passions. And yet, what *does* lie at the bottom of Sade's thought? What exactly did he say? Where is the method in his system, where does it begin and end? For all his obsession with reason is there anything more than the mere shadow of a system in the workings of his thought? And why is it that so many well co-ordinated principles fail to form the perfectly solid whole they ought and appear to form? Here we have the first of Sade's singularities. At every moment his theoretical ideas set free the irrational forces with which they are bound up. These forces both excite and upset the thought by an impetus of a kind that causes the thought first to resist and then to yield, to try again for mastery, to gain an ascendancy, but only by liberating other dark forces by which once again the ideas are carried away, side-tracked and perverted. The result is that all that is said is clear but seems to be at the mercy of something that has not been said. Then, a little further on, what was concealed emerges, is recaptured by logic but, in its turn, obeys the movement of a still further hidden force. In the end everything has been brought to light, everything has been expressed, but equally everything has once more been plunged into the obscurity of undigested ideas and experiences that cannot be given shape.

When he comes up against this way of thinking which is only clarified by the pressure of another thought which, at any given moment, cannot itself be clearly grasped, the reader's uneasiness is often extreme. It is not helped by the fact that Sade's declarations of principle or of what might be called his basic philosophy seem to be simplicity itself. It is a philosophy of self-interest, of pure egoism. Each man must do what he likes, he has no law except his pleasure. The first premise of this morality is absolute solitude. Sade has said and reiterated it in every way: nature has caused us to be born alone and there is no possible relationship between one man and another. My only rule of conduct, then, is my preference for all that affects me agreeably, and my indifference to any outcome of my preferences that may result in harm for

others. The deepest suffering of others is always less important than my own pleasure. What does it matter if I have to pay for a minor pleasure by a monstrous sequence of crimes, for enjoyment pleases me and is mine, while the effect of crime is exterior to me and cannot touch me.

These principles are clear. We find them developed in twenty volumes and in a thousand ways. Sade is never weary of them. He takes infinite pleasure in relating them to the theories, then fashionable, about the equality of individuals before nature and before the law. He proposes arguments such as: Since in the eyes of nature all creatures are identical, this identity gives me the right not to sacrifice myself for the preservation of others whose ruin is indispensable to my happiness. Or, again, he draws up a kind of Declaration of the Rights of Eroticism, with for fundamental principle this idea, applying equally to men and women: give yourself to anyone who desires you, and take anyone you desire. 'What harm do I do, what offence do I commit, if I say to a beautiful creature I meet: "Lend me the part of your body that can give me an instant's satisfaction, and enjoy, if it so pleases you, the part of mine you prefer"?' To Sade such a proposition is irrefutable. For page after page he invokes the equality of individuals and the reciprocity of rights without noticing that his reasoning, far from gaining strength, becomes more crazy. 'An act of possession can never be exercised on a free being,' he says. But what does he conclude from that? Not that it is wrong to do violence against anyone and use them for pleasure against their will, but that no one, so as to refuse him, can plead as excuse an exclusive attachment or of 'belonging' to anyone. The equality of all creatures is the right to dispose equally of all creatures, and freedom is the power of subordinating everyone to one's wishes.

When we are up against propositions like these we are apt to imagine that there is something lacking in Sade's mental processes, a sort of lacuna or deficiency. We get the impression of a deeply disordered thought in bizarre suspense over a void. But then suddenly logic regains the upper hand, objections appear, and little by little the system takes shape. Justine, who, as is well known, stands in this cosmos for stubborn and humble virtue, always oppressed and unfortunate but never convinced of the error of her ways, suddenly declares in the most reasonable way: 'Your principle presupposes power. If my happiness consists in taking no account of

the interests of others, in doing them harm as the opportunity rises, the day will surely dawn when the interests of others will consist in doing harm to me. In the name of what will I be able to protest? Can the solitary individual struggle against all this?' This, it will be realized, is the classical objection. Sade's hero replies to it explicitly and implicitly in many ways that, little by little, lead us to the core of the universe he inhabits. Yes, he begins by saying, my right is the right of power. And, indeed, humanity for Sade is essentially composed of a few powerful men who have had the energy to raise themselves above the law and above prejudice, who feel they are worthy of nature because she has endowed them with extravagant appetites which they seek to satisfy by every means. These men without parallel generally belong to a privileged class. They are dukes and kings. There is the pope, himself an offspring of the nobility. They benefit from the advantages of their rank and fortune and by the immunity that their situation assures them. Their birth gave them all the privileges of inequality and they take pleasure in perfecting them with implacable despotism. They are the strongest because they belong to a strong class. 'By the people', says one of them, 'I mean that vile and despicable class that can only live by dint of sweat and tears: everything that breathes should form an alliance against such contemptible creatures.'

Nevertheless, it must be made clear that if, generally speaking, these Princes of debauch represent to their own advantage all that there is of inequality between the classes, this is only an historical accident to which Sade gives no importance in his scale of values. He discerned perfectly clearly that, at the time he wrote, power was a social category, something established in the organization of society such as it was before and after the Revolution. But for all that, he believes that power (and moreover solitude) is not only a state but a choice and a conquest, and only the man who attains power by his own energy is really powerful. In reality his heroes are drawn from two opposite backgrounds: the highest and the lowest, the classes the most favoured and the least favoured, from amongst the great of the earth and from the scum of the underworld. From the very beginning both of these classes have the advantage of an extreme situation: the extremity of poverty is as powerful a springboard as the dizziness of fortune. Madame Dubois or Madame Durand revolt against the law because their

situation is too wretched for them to be able to conform to it and survive. Saint-Fond or the Duc de Blangis are too far above the law to conform to it without a fall. That is why in the works of Sade there is an appeal to contradictory principles in his apology for crime. For some people inequality is a fact of nature. Certain men of necessity are victims and slaves, without rights, without an existence, and against them everything is permissible. Hence the wild praise of tyranny and of those political constitutions whose aim is to render forever impossible a revolt of the feeble or an enrichment of the poor. 'Let us establish', says Verneuil, 'that according to the intentions of nature, one class of individuals must of necessity be subject to the other by reason of its weakness and its low birth. The law is not made for the people . . . The essential thing in all wise government is that the people should not trespass on the privileges of the great.' And Saint-Fond says: 'The people will be held in a bondage that will render them incapable of ever attempting to gain power or of laying hands on the property of the rich'. Or again: 'What are called sexual crimes will never be punished save among the slave castes'.

Here we seem to be dealing with the wildest theory of extreme and absolute despotism. But the perspective suddenly changes. What does the Dubois say? 'By nature we are all born equal. If fate is pleased to upset this original law, it is up to us to put things right and use our skill to remedy the situation . . . Good faith and patience on our part would only serve to double our chains, whereas our crimes will become virtues, and we would indeed be dupes if we deprived ourselves of them and so fail to lessen a little the yoke we have to bear.' And, she adds, for the poor, only crime can open the gates of life: criminality is the compensation for injustice, just as theft is the revenge of the dispossessed. Thus, as is now clear, equality and inequality, freedom to oppress and revolt against the oppressor are no more than purely provisional arguments by which Sade's hero, according to his social status, affirms his right to power. Soon, moreover, the distinction between those who need crime so as to exist and those who only enjoy existence through crime, disappears. The Dubois becomes a baroness. The Durand, a low-class poisoner, is raised above all the princesses whom Juliette unhesitatingly sacrifices to her. The Peers become gangsters or brigands (as in *Faxelange*) or else, the better to rob and assassinate fools, they become

innkeepers. And the fact that the greater number of the victims of debauchery are chosen from the aristocracy evens things out. It is to his mother, the Countess, that the Marquis de Bressac declares with superb contempt: 'Your days belong to me, and mine are sacred'.

And now what point have we reached? A few men have become powerful, some through birth, but these have shown that they deserved their power by the way they increased and enjoyed it. Others have risen to power, and the test of their success is that after using crime to gain power they use this power to be free for further crimes. Such is the world. There are those who have risen to the heights, and around them, but in the infinite distance, stretches a dust of nameless and numberless individuals without either power or rights. Now let us see what becomes of the law of absolute egoism. 'I do what I like,' says Sade's hero, 'I only recognize my own pleasure and to assure it I torture and kill. You threaten me with a similar fate for the day I meet someone whose happiness consists in torturing and killing me. But it is precisely to raise myself above this danger that I have acquired power.' When Sade produces answers of this kind we can be sure we are slipping towards an aspect of his thought whose only consistency depends on the obscure forces it conceals. What is this power that fears neither chance nor law, that contemptuously exposes itself to the terrible risks of law conceived as: 'I will do you all the harm I like, do me all the harm you can' and claims that this rule will always be to its advantage. Notice that one single exception is enough to make these principles collapse. If on just one occasion the Man of Power runs into misfortune through seeking nothing but his own pleasure, if in the course of exercising his tyranny he falls a victim, even once, he will be lost. The law of pleasure will be shown to be a cheat, and instead of seeking triumph through abuse, men will return to their mediocre way of life, apprehensive of the smallest mischance.

Sade knows this. 'And what if luck changes?' asks Justine. And so he will go deeper into his system and show that no evil can ever befall a man who commits himself to evil with sufficient energy. Here lies the essential theme of his work: virtue earns all misfortunes, but vice earns the benefit of a constant prosperity. Sometimes, above all in the early versions of *Justine*, this affirmation appears to be no more than a factitious thesis illustrated, in guise

of proof, by the manipulations of a story of which the author pulls the strings. We tell ourselves that Sade is satisfied with fables, that he is too ready to lay everything at the door of dark Providence whose function is to give the best to those who have chosen the worst. But with *La Nouvelle Justine* and *Juliette* all is changed. There can be no doubt about Sade's deep conviction that misfortune can never befall the man whose egoism is absolute. Better, this egoist is happy in the highest measure, and always will be, and there will be no exception. Is this madness? Possibly. But this notion is bound up with forces of such violence that they end by making the ideas they uphold irrefutable to him. It must be admitted that the translation of this conviction into theory is not done without difficulty. Sade has recourse to several solutions, and he tries them out ceaselessly, although no single one can satisfy him. The first is purely verbal. It consists in saying 'no' to the social contract which, for him, is the safeguard of the weak and, in theory, a serious menace for the strong. In practice the Man of Power is well able to make use of the law to strengthen his arbitrary position, but in that event his power depends on the law and so, in theory again, the law is the real source of power. As long as anarchy or the state of war are not in force the sovereign is only the ruler, because, even if the law helps him to crush the weak, it does so by means of an authority created in the name of the weak, and, after all, he is only master by substituting for the strength of the solitary man the false bond of a pact. 'The passions of my neighbour are infinitely less to be feared than the injustice of the law, because my neighbour's passions are restricted by mine, whereas nothing limits or constrains the injustices of the law.' Nothing limits the law because there is nothing above it, and, therefore, it is always above me. That is why it oppresses me even when it serves me. And so, if Sade recognized his own features in the Revolution, it was only in the measure to which the Revolution represented the possibility of a regime without law during the course of the transition from one law to another. He has explained it in these curious observations: 'The reign of the law is inferior to that of anarchy. The biggest proof of my contention is that when a government wants to remake its Constitution it is obliged to plunge itself into anarchy. To abrogate its ancient laws it must needs establish a revolutionary regime in which there is no law. In the end new

laws are born of this regime, but the second state is of necessity less pure than the first, because it derives from it . . . '

Power, in fact, can make any kind of regime serve its ends. It denies authority to them all, and in the core of a world perverted by law it creates an enclosure in which law is silent, and where the legal sovereign is ignored rather than resisted. In the statutes of 'The Society of the Friends of Crime' there is an article prohibiting all political activity. 'The Society of the Friends of Crime' respects the government under which it lives, and, if it places itself above the law it is because, according to its principles, man has no power to make laws which contradict the laws of nature, but the bad behaviour of its members behind closed doors should not cause outrage either to the people or its rulers. And if, in Sade's work, Power should happen to accomplish a political task and be involved in revolution, as in the case of Borchamps who comes to agreement with the Lodge of the North to overthrow the Swedish monarchy, the motives inspiring it have nothing to do with the will to emancipate the law. 'What motives make you detest Swedish despotism?' one of the conspirators asks, and the answer is 'Jealousy, ambition, pride, weariness of being dominated, my own desire to tyrannize over others'. 'Does the happiness of the people play any part in your views?' 'I only recognize my own.'

Power is always able to maintain that it has nothing to fear from the commonalty of men, who are weak, and nothing to fear from a law whose legitimacy it does not recognize. The real problem is that of the relationship between Power and power. These exceptional men who come from the heights or the depths of society must, of necessity, meet. They are brought together by the similarity of their tastes. The fact that they are exceptional at once sets them apart and draws them together. But what form can the relation between exception and exception take? There is no doubt that this point has considerably preoccupied Sade. As always, he proceeds from one solution to another, and finally, at the end of all his logic, he produces out of the puzzle the only word that matters to him. When he invents a secret society governed by strict rules designed to moderate excesses, he has the excuse of fashion, for he lived in a time in which the freemasonry of libertinism and Freemasonry in the conventional sense created, within a collapsing society, a quantity of little societies and secret

colleges based on complicity of passions and mutual respect for dangerous ideas. 'The Society of the Friends of Crime' is an attempt of this kind. Its statutes, which he analyses and studies at length, forbid the members to give way to their furious desires with each other—these can only be assuaged in two brothels which are constantly replenished by the virtuous classes. Between themselves the members should 'indulge all their whims and do everything', but without cruelty. It is easy to see why. People who only expect pleasure from evil should be prevented from meeting on a plane on which evil might become their undoing. Superior debauchees may make an alliance but they don't clash.

But a compromise of this kind is not enough to satisfy Sade. And so we notice that the heroes of his books are constantly drawn into association by agreements to fix the limits of their power and to impose order on disorder, and yet the possibility of betrayal is always present. Amongst the accomplices tension never ceases to grow until, at last, they feel less bound by the oath which unites them than by the mutual compulsion to break it. It is this situation that makes the last part of *Juliette* so dramatic for Juliette has principles. She respects debauchery, and when she meets an accomplished evildoer, sees the perfection of the crime for which he is responsible and the power for destruction he represents, she is not only led into association with him, but is led to spare him if she can, even when this association becomes dangerous for her. And thus she refuses to have the ogre Minski assassinated, even though she is in danger of being killed by him. 'That man is too harmful to mankind for me to deprive the universe of him.' She finally sacrifices another inventor of masterpieces of obscenity, but only because she has observed that at the end of his bloody orgies he was in the habit of visiting a chapel to purify his soul. Does this mean that there is some final principle by which the libertine can never be either object or victim of his libertinism? Mme de Donis says to Juliette: 'You have told me a hundred times that debauched women don't ruin each other. Are you going to throw over this maxim?' The answer is clear. She does throw it over, and Mme de Donis is sacrificed. And so, little by little, perish all the most deeply loved and most distinguished accomplices in debauch; victims either of their loyalty or of their perjury, of weariness or of the strength of their feelings. Nothing can save them, nothing can excuse them. No sooner has Juliette

sworn her best friends to their death than she turns to new allies and exchanges vows of eternal trust with them. And they themselves laugh at these oaths knowing full well that they only assign limits to their debauchery so as to have the pleasure of passing beyond these limits.

The situation is fairly well summarized in the following conversation between several Princes of Crime. One of them, Fernand, says of his cousin Bressac: 'He is my heir. All the same, I swear that my being alive doesn't make him impatient. We have the same tastes and the same way of thinking, and, in me, he is sure to find a friend.' 'To be sure,' says Bressac, 'I will never do you the slightest harm.' Yet this very Bressac remarks that another of his relatives, d'Esterval, who specializes in cutting the throats of passers-by, came very near to assassinating him. 'Yes,' says d'Esterval, 'as a relative, but never as a brother in debauchery.' For all that Bressac remains sceptical, and they both agree that his last consideration in no way restrained Dorothée, d'Esterval's wife. But what does Dorothée answer? 'When I condemn you, I flatter you. My terrible habit of immolating the men who attract me decided your sentence in the very moment I made my declaration of love.' That is clear enough. But given such conditions, what happens to Sade's thesis on the happiness of evil, and his conviction that a man is always happy if he has all the vices and of necessity unhappy if he has a single virtue? In fact, Sade's work is littered with the corpses of debauchees struck down in the height of their glory. Catastrophe befalls not only Justine, who is unique, but also the splendid Clairwill, the strongest and most energetic of Sade's heroines, it befalls Saint-Fond who is assassinated by Noircueil, and the licentious Borghese who is thrown into a volcano, and a hundred other perfect criminals. These are strange ends and peculiar triumphs for the profligates! How can Sade's mad reasoning be blind to all its contradictions? But, for him, these contradictions are really proofs, and we must see why. From a casual reading of *Justine* we might take it to be simply a pious tale. We see a young and virtuous girl who is for ever being violated, beaten and tortured, the victim of a destiny bent on destroying her. And when we read *Juliette* we see a perverted girl soar from pleasure to pleasure. A plot of this character is scarcely convincing. But that is because we have failed to pay attention to its most important aspect; noticing only the sadness

of one girl and the satisfaction of the other, we fail to see that in reality the stories of the two sisters are identical, that everything that happens to Justine happens to Juliette also, and that both underwent the same ordeals and experienced the same trials. Juliette too, is thrown into gaol, thrashed without mercy, threatened with death and endlessly tortured. Her existence is horrible, but—and here we come to it—her sufferings give her pleasure and her tortures delight her. ‘Sweet are the chains of the crime one loves.’ And I am not even referring to those remarkable torments which are so terrible for Justine and so very pleasing to Juliette. In a scene that takes place in the castle of a corrupt judge the unfortunate Justine is delivered over to really appalling tortures: her sufferings are incredible and it is difficult to know what to think of injustice on such a scale. But what happens? A completely perverted girl, who is present, is so excited by what she sees that she insists that she should immediately undergo the same torments. And she derives infinite ecstasy from them. So it is true that virtue is the cause of man’s unhappiness, though not because it exposes him to unfortunate experiences, but because if we eradicate virtue, what was unhappiness turns into an opportunity for pleasure and torment becomes an ecstasy.

For Sade, the sovereign man is inaccessible to evil because no one can do him evil. He is the man of all passions and his passions take pleasure in everything. Some people have received Jean Paulhan’s idea of an inherent masochism lying behind the sadism of Sade as the expression of a paradox too witty to be true. But we can see that this idea lies at the heart of the system. The completely egotistical man is the man who can transform all disgust into pleasure, and all revulsion into attraction. Like the Philosopher of the Boudoir, he affirms, ‘Nothing disgusts me, everything gives me pleasure, I wish to combine all satisfaction’. And that is why in *Les 120 Journées*, Sade took on the gigantic task of making a complete enumeration of all human eccentricities, aberrations and possibilities. To be at the mercy of nothing he needs to experience everything. ‘You will know nothing if you have not known everything, and if you are timid enough to stop at the natural, it will always escape you.’

We can see why the unfortunate Justine’s objection: ‘And what if luck changes?’ cannot impress the criminal. Luck may change and become bad luck, but it will only be a new kind of luck, every

bit as desirable and as satisfactory as the other. But you risk the hangman. Perhaps you will end up with an ignominious death. That, replies the debauchee, is my dearest wish. 'Oh Juliette,' says the Borghese, 'how I would want my follies to lead me, like the lowest of creatures, to the fate to which their wretchedness condemns them. For me the scaffold itself would be the crown of ecstasy. I would be facing death and enjoying the pleasure of expiring as a victim of my crimes.' And someone else says: 'The real debauchee even cherishes the reproaches his appalling behaviour earns him. Have we not seen people who loved even the tortures human vengeance prepared for them, who underwent them with joy, who saw in the scaffold a throne of glory on which they would have been angry indeed not to perish with the same courage that inspired them in the loathsome practices of their crimes. And so we can see men at the last stage of considered corruption.' What can the law do against such power? It sets out to punish it and succeeds in rewarding it. When it reviles it, it exalts it, and, for the same reason, what can the debauchee do against his equal? The day will come when he betrays and strikes him down, but his very treason gives a sharp pleasure to his victim who sees in it the confirmation of all his suspicions and so dies in the ecstasy of having been the occasion of a further crime. One of Sade's strangest heroines is called Amelia. She lives in Sweden. One day she sets out to meet Borchamps, the conspirator we have already mentioned. He, in the hope of a mass execution, has just handed over to the King all the participants in his conspiracy, and his treason has excited the young woman. 'I adore your violence,' she tells him. 'Swear to me that one day I too shall be your victim; from the age of fifteen, my mind has been inflamed only with the idea of perishing a victim to the cruel passion of perversion. Obviously I don't want to die tomorrow, my extravagance doesn't go that far, but this is the only way in which I want to die. To make my death the occasion of a crime is an idea that excites me above all others.' A strange wish and well deserving the answer 'I worship your ideas to madness, and I think we shall do great things together.' 'I agree, they are corrupt and perverse.' So everything becomes clear: for the complete man, who is the whole of man, no evil is possible. If he does harm to others, what ecstasy! If others harm him, what joy! Virtue serves him because it is weak and he can crush it, and vice is agreeable because he

derives satisfaction from the chaos it creates, even if at his own expense. If he lives, there is no single event of his existence which he cannot welcome as happy. If he dies, his death is an even greater happiness, and in knowledge of his destruction he sees the crown of a life that is only justified by the need to destroy. Thus, he is immune from others. No one can touch him, nothing can deprive him of the power of being himself and of enjoying it. This is the primary meaning of his solitude. Even if, in his turn, he seems to be victim and slave, the violence of the passions that he can slake in no matter what circumstances guarantee him his sovereignty, and make him feel that in every condition of life and death he remains all powerful. It is for this, that despite the similarity of their descriptions, it seems right to leave the paternity of masochism to Sacher Masoch and of sadism to Sade. With Sade's heroes the pleasures of debasement in no way reduce their mastery, and those of abjection raise them to the heights. All those feelings that we call shame, remorse, love of punishment remain foreign to them. When Saint-Fond says to Juliette, 'My pride is so great that I would like to be served on bended knee and never speak, save through an interpreter, to all that filthy mob that is called the people,' she asks, without any irony, 'But do not the follies of debauchery bring you down from this elevation?' 'For minds that think like ours,' answers Saint-Fond, 'such humiliation is a delicious adjunct to our pride.' And Sade adds by way of comment, 'This is easy to understand: in doing what no one else does, we are unique of our kind.' On the moral plane, there is the same satisfaction of pride in the feeling of being an outcast of humanity. 'The world must shudder when it learns of the crimes we shall have committed. We must force men to blush at being of the same species as we are. I demand that a monument be raised to publish these crimes to the universe, and our names be engraved on it by our own hands. To be Unique, unique of one's kind, is the true test of sovereignty.' And we shall soon see the absolute meaning Sade gives to this word.

Now everything becomes clearer: but at this point we also feel that everything is beginning to be rather obscure. The progression by which the Unique person escapes from the clutches of others is far from obvious. In some ways it is a kind of stoical insensibility which seems to suppose man's perfect autonomy when confronted with the world. But at the same time, it is just the opposite

because, while he is independent of others who can never harm him, by this very fact the Unique person at once establishes a relationship of absolute domination over them, and this not because the others can do nothing against him, or that poignards, tortures, and acts of humiliation leave him unscathed, but because he has all power over others, and even the pain dealt out by them reinforces the pleasure he derives from power and helps him to exercise his sovereignty. And here the situation becomes rather embarrassing. From the moment at which 'being master of myself' means being 'master of others', from the moment at which my independence ceases to derive from my own will, but comes from the dependence of others on me, it is clear that I remain linked to others and that I have need of them, if only to annihilate them. This difficulty about Sade has often been mentioned. It is not even certain that he was aware of it, and one of the originalities of his unique mind possibly comes from this fact; when one is not Sade, a decisive problem arises which reintroduces relations of human solidarity between master and slave: but if one is Sade there is no problem and it is even impossible to envisage one.

There is no space to go over, as one would like, all the numerous texts (and with Sade everything is in infinite profusion) which bear on this situation. The fact is that contradictions abound. Sometimes, the violence of debauchery seems almost haunted by this contradiction at the root of its pleasures. The debauchee knows no greater joy than destroying his victims, but this joy is ruined and destroys itself by destroying what causes it. 'The pleasure of killing a woman', says one of them, 'is soon over: when she is dead she can feel nothing more; the ecstasy of making her suffer ends with her life. . . . Let us brand her, let us flay her; she will suffer from this treatment up to the last moment of her life, and, by its infinite prolongation, our lust will be the more delicious.' Similarly Saint-Fond, bored with simple tortures, would like a kind of infinite death for each person, which is why with remarkable ingenuity he conceives of a raid on Hell, and makes plans to dispose of that inexhaustible source of torture at the expense of people of his choice. Here, in all clarity, we can see how entangled are the relationships that oppression creates between oppressed and oppressor. Sade's hero derives his existence from dealing out death and sometimes, in his longing for an eternity of life, he

dreams of a death that he can dispense for ever, so that the executioner and the victim, eternally placed face to face, are endowed with identical power and the same divine attribute of eternity. There is no denying that this contradiction is embedded in Sade's thought. But commonly, he manages to transcend it with reasons that give us increased light on the world he inhabits. Clairwill reproaches Saint-Fond with what she calls his unforgiveable excesses and, to put him back in the right path, she gives him this advice: 'Replace the idea of pleasure which now fills your head—the idea of prolonging to infinity the tortures of the creature you have destined for death—replace it by a greater abundance of murders: do not try to kill the same individual for ever, which is impossible, but assassinate many more, which is easy'. The large number is, indeed, the elegant solution. To look upon other people from the point of view of quantity kills them more completely than when they are destroyed by physical violence. It may well be that the criminal is indissolubly united to the man he assassinates. But the debauchee, who, when he kills his victim, only experiences the need to sacrifice a thousand more, seems strangely free from any complicity with him. In his eyes the victim does not exist in himself, he is not a distinct being but a mere cipher who can be indefinitely substituted in an immense erotic equation. When we read declarations such as: 'Nothing amuses, nothing excites me like large numbers', we understand better why the idea of equality is used to bolster up so much of Sade's reasoning. All men are equal, simply means that no one creature is worth more than another, all are interchangeable and with no more significance than that of a single unit in an infinite enumeration. In comparison with the Unique person, all the others are equally meaningless and the Unique person, by reducing them to nothing, only makes their nothingness more manifest.

This is what makes Sade's world so strange. Scenes of violence succeed one another; the repetitions are infinite and fabulous. In one single session it is common for each debauchee to torture and massacre four or five hundred victims. The next day he begins again, and in the evening follows up with a new holocaust. The order is then slightly changed, excitement is refreshed, and hecatomb is piled on hecatomb. But what of it? Who can fail to see that in these mass executions those who die have lost every shred of reality, and if they can disappear with such derisory ease it is

because they have already been annihilated by a total and absolute act of destruction, that they were never really present, and that they only die to witness to a kind of primordial cataclysm, and to a destruction which is valid not only for them but for all. This is the striking thing. The cosmos through which the Unique person makes his way is a desert; the creatures he meets there are less than things, less than shadows, and when he torments and destroys them he doesn't rob them of their lives but proves their nothingness: it is their non-existence of which he is master and from which he derives his greatest pleasure. As the Duc de Blangis says to the women, gathered together for the delectation of the four debauchees at the outset of *Les 120 Journées*: 'Reflect upon your situation, upon what you are, and what we are, and let your reflections make you tremble. You are here, away from France, in the depths of an uninhabitable forest, behind precipitous mountains whose passes were blocked the moment you crossed them. You are shut up in an impenetrable castle, no one whatsoever knows you are here; you are separated from your friends and from your relations and already you are *dead to the world*.' This must be taken in its strict sense: they are already dead, wiped out, shut up in the absolute emptiness of a Bastille into which existence no longer enters and in which the fact that they are alive only makes us more aware of their 'being already dead'.

Naturally we are discounting the tales of necrophilia which, though fairly frequent in Sade, are not generally the 'normal' pursuits of his heroes. Moreover, we should point out that when one of them exclaims 'Ah! what a lovely corpse' and becomes excited by the passivity of death, he had begun by being a murderer and it is the effects of his aggressive power that he is striving to prolong beyond death. What is characteristic of Sade's cosmos is not the longing to have to do exclusively with the motionless and petrified existence of the corpse, but that in the core of his world lies the demand for sovereignty as affirmed by an immense negation. This negation is achieved through large numbers, and no one particular instance can satisfy it; it is essentially aimed at surpassing the plane of human existence. It is all very well for Sade's hero to master others by his power to destroy them: if he gives the impression that he is never dependent on them, even in view of his need to destroy them, and if he always appears able to do without them, this is because he has placed himself on a plane

where no common measure with them is possible, and he has done this, once and for all, by setting as the limits to his project of destruction something infinitely beyond men and their short existence.

Thus it is certain that in Sade the spirit of crime is bound up with a nostalgic dream of transcendence which is ceaselessly degraded and dishonoured by the weakness of its possibilities of realization. The finest crime which earth has to offer is a mere trifle which could only arouse the debauchee's contempt. Every one of these profligates who, like Jerome the monk, experiences a sense of shame when faced with the mediocrity of his acts, dreams of a crime superior to all that man can do in the world, 'and unfortunately', Jerone says, 'I can't find it: all that we do is only the shadow of what we would like to do'. 'I want', says Clairwill, 'to find a crime whose effects would react for ever, even when I am acting no longer, so that there should be no single instant of my life, even when sleeping, that I was not the cause of some upheaval or other, and that this upheaval would be enough to bring with it a general corruption or chaos of a kind whose effects would be prolonged beyond my lifetime.' And to this Juliette gives a reply calculated to please the author of *La Nouvelle Justine*: 'Try to perpetuate a moral crime through your pen'. If Sade, who in his system, reduces the part of intellectual excitement to the minimum, and who has almost completely suppressed the eroticism of the imagination (because his own erotic dream is projected on to characters who do not dream but who really act the unreal processes of his enjoyment: his eroticism is a dream eroticism because it is generally realized through fiction, but the more he dreams of this eroticism the more he demands a fiction from which dreams are expelled and in which debauch is really achieved and lived), if, nevertheless, Sade has in exceptional cases exalted the imagination, it is because he knows perfectly well that the origin of many imperfect crimes lies in a impossible crime only conceivable by the imagination, and this is why he makes Belmor say: 'Oh Juliette, how delightful are the pleasures of imagination. The world is ours in these moments: no single creature can resist us, we devastate the universe and repeople it with new objects only to devastate it again; the means for all crimes are at our disposal, we use them all, and we multiply the horror a hundredfold.'

In his book, which not only contains some powerful thought on

Sade, but on the problems which Sade's existence illuminates, Pierre Klossowsky explains the very complicated character of the relationships between the Sadean consciousness, God, and one's neighbour. He shows that these relationships are negative but that, in so far as the negation is real, it reintroduces the notion it suppresses, that is to say that the notion of God and the notion of one's neighbour are indispensable to the consciousness of the debauchee. This is a subject that can be discussed indefinitely because Sade's work is a chaos of clear ideas in which, while everything is said, everything is also disguised. Nevertheless, his claim to originality seems to have a firm stake in the idea that man's sovereignty is based on a transcendental power of negation: a power in no way dependent on the objects it destroys and which, for their destruction does not even need to suppose their previous existence, because, at the moment in which it destroys them it has already, and at all times, considered them as non-existent. Now, this dialectic has at once its best example, and perhaps its justification, in the way in which Sade's all-powerful hero takes up his position before divine Omnipotence.

Maurice Heine has shown the exceptional strength of Sade's atheism. But, as Pierre Klossowski has every reason to remind us, this atheism is not a cold-blooded one. The moment the name of God appears, in even the calmest passage, his language straightway flares up, his tone is raised and the emotion of hate runs away with his words and throws them into confusion. It is not in the scenes of lust that Sade shows passion, but each time the Unique person sees some trace of God on his path, violence, contempt, pride, desire and the longing for power are immediately inflamed. In some way the idea of God is man's unpardonable fault, his original sin, the proof of his nothingness, and an authorization and justification for crime. For no method can be too violent to destroy a creature who has agreed to abase himself before God. Sade writes: 'The concept of God is the only fault for which I cannot forgive man'. This statement is decisive and it is one of the keys of his system. Belief in an all-powerful god which only allows man the status of a dummy, or an atom of nothingness, forces the complete man to seize on this superhuman power by himself exercising, in the name of man and over all men, the sovereign rights which men have given to God. When the criminal makes a kill he is God on earth because he establishes over his victim the

domination which the latter associates with the definition of divine sovereignty. The minute a real debauchee observes, even in the mind of the most corrupt profligate, the tiniest trace of religious faith, he immediately passes a decree of death: and this is entirely because the lapsed profligate has destroyed himself and abdicated into the hands of God, and so the man who kills him does no more than regularize a situation only slightly disguised by appearances.

Sade's hero denies mankind, and this denial is achieved through the concept of God. For a moment he turns himself into God so that men should be destroyed before him and so realize the nothingness of a creature compared with God. 'You hate mankind, do you not, Prince?' ask Juliette. 'I loathe it. Not a moment passes in which I do not have some project for its violent destruction. No species is more frightful . . . What abjection, how vile it is and how disgusting.' 'But,' interrupts Juliette, 'as for you, can you really believe that you belong to men? Oh, no! for when one dominates them with such force it is impossible to be of their species.' 'She is quite right,' says Saint-Fond, 'yes, indeed we are gods.'

Nevertheless, the dialectic continues on its course: Sade's hero who has claimed for himself that power over men that men concede to God, never forgets for an instant that this power is entirely negative. There can only be one meaning in being God—to crush men and destroy creation. 'I would like to be Pandora's box,' Saint-Fond goes on to say, 'so that all the evils emerging from my heart should destroy every creature individually.' And Verneuil says: 'If a god really existed, are we not his rivals, for we destroy what he created'. And so, little by little, an ambiguous conception of Omnipotence is built up, and about its final meaning there can be no doubt. Pierre Klossowsky stresses the theory of Saint-Fond—a man singular among all Sade's heroes in that he believes in a Supreme Being. But the god which he worships is not good but vindictive, barbarous, wicked, unjust and cruel. 'He is a being supreme in wickedness, a god of evil.' From this idea Sade has developed many brilliant conclusions. He portrays an imaginary Last Judgement which is described with all the resources of his peculiar and ferocious humour. We hear God scolding the Good in these terms: 'When you saw that everything on earth was vicious and criminal why did you stray along the paths of virtue? Should not the perpetual misery in which I have deluged the

universe have convinced you that I only like chaos and that to please me you had to annoy me. Did I not daily give you an example of destruction? Why did you not destroy? Fools who failed to imitate me.'

But with this in mind, it is clear that such a conception of an infernal deity is no more than a stage in the dialectic by which Sade's supermen, after denying man in the name of God, turns to praise God and in turn deny Him in the name of Nature, and, finally, to deny Nature by identifying it with the spirit of negation. Negation, that has exterminated the idea of man, comes to rest, so to speak, for an instant in the evil deity before taking itself for its object. In becoming God, Saint-Fond has, at the same time, obliged God to become Saint-Fond; and the Supreme Being into whose hands the weak man delivers himself so as to break the power of the strong man, is now no more than a gigantic limitation, a transcendent bronze idol who crushes each one in proportion to his weakness. This is hatred of mankind pushed to its furthest limits. A loathing so violent that at every moment it seems to give reality to what it denies in order the more to justify itself and assert itself. 'Were the existence of God true,' says Jean Dubois, 'I confess the mere pleasure of perpetually annoying Him would become the most precious consolation for the necessity in which I would then find myself of having to believe in Him.' But Klossowsky seems to think that such burning hatred testifies to a faith that has forgotten its name and has recourse to blasphemy to force God to break His silence. This hardly seems to be the case. On the contrary, everything seems to show that this hatred has only attached itself to God so particularly because He provides a superb objective for it and one which can be perpetually nourished. God for Sade is simply a prop for his hatred. His hatred is too great for any object to be really important to it. Since it is infinite and insatiable it is doomed to feed on itself and to be glad of this infinity to which it gives the name of God. 'Your system', says Clairwill to Saint-Fond, 'has its roots in the deep horror you feel for God.' But it is only the hatred which is real and, in the end, it will turn against Nature with the same coldness as it turned against the inexistent god.

In reality, if the matters of religion, the name of God, and the people who make God or priests unleash all Sade's most violent passions, it is because the words 'god' and 'religion' are just the

ones that incarnate all the forms of his hatred. In God, he hates the nothingness of man who gave himself such a master, and the thought of this nothingness infuriates him to such a degree that he can only co-operate with God to assert this nothingness. Next, in God, he hates His divine Omnipotence, in which he perceives his own, and so God becomes the image and body of his infinite hatred. Finally, he hates in God His wretchedness, the vacuity of an existence which in so far as it expresses itself as existence and creation is nothing, because what is great and all that matters is the spirit of destruction.

In Sade's system this spirit of destruction is identified with Nature. On this point his thought has hesitated; he needed to get rid of the atheist philosophies then in fashion for which he could only feel sympathy and in which his reason, always hungry for argument, found inexhaustible resources. But, to the extent that he managed to get beyond the naturalist ideology, and to the extent that he was not taken in by external analogies, he shows us how he accompanied logic to its furthest frontiers and did not retreat behind the dark forces that upheld it. Nature is one of the words that—like so many of his contemporaries—he is always ready to use. It is in the name of Nature that he leads the fight against God and all that God represents, especially morality. We have no need to emphasize that Sade's proliferation on this subject is vertiginous. First of all Nature for him is universal life, and for hundreds of pages the whole of his philosophy consists in repeating that the immoral instincts are good because they are natural facts, and that the first and last example of them is Nature. Put in other words, not morality but facts must rule. But then, embarrassed by seeing that he is being led to give an equal value to the instincts of virtue and of vice, he tries to set up a new scale of values with crime at its summit. His chief argument boils down to saying that crime is more in conformity with the spirit of Nature because it is activity and hence life: Nature, he says, wants to create and needs crime to destroy: all this is established in a very detailed manner, in long boring passages interspersed with occasional striking proofs. Nevertheless, by dint of speaking of Nature and finding himself always up against this sovereign point of reference, little by little, Sade's hero becomes irritated and his hatred soon makes Nature so intolerable to him that he covers it with curses and denials. 'Yes, my friend, yes, I loathe Nature.'

This revolt has two deep motives. On one hand it seems to him intolerable that the power of unparalleled destruction which he represents has no other end than allowing Nature more room for creation. On the other, in so far as he himself belongs to Nature, he feels that Nature escapes his curses and the more he outrages it the better he serves it, the more he destroys it the more he obeys its law. Hence his mad outbursts of hatred and revolt. 'Oh, you blind and idiotic force, when I have exterminated all the creatures that dwell on earth I will be far from my goal, for I will have done you a service, evil mother, and I only aim at venging myself for the stupidity and wickedness by which you cause men to suffer by never giving them the means of satisfying the fearful inclinations you inspire in them.' Here we have the expression of a primeval and elementary feeling; man's deepest need is to outrage nature, the need a thousand times stronger than offending God. 'In all our activities we can only inflict suffering on creatures or on shadows, but Nature is not one of these and it is she that I would like to outrage. I would like to upset her plans, reverse her course, arrest the circulation of the stars, overthrow the planets floating in space, destroy what serves her, protect what harms her and, in a word, insult her in her works, and I cannot do it.' Once again in this passage Sade is superficial enough to confuse Nature with her principal laws and this allows him to dream of a cataclysm that could overthrow them: but his logic rejects this compromise and when, elsewhere, he imagines a mechanic who invents a machine capable of disintegrating the universe, he has to admit that no one will ever have deserved better of Nature than such a man. Sade is perfectly aware that to destroy all things is not to destroy the world, for the world is not only universal affirmation but universal destruction so that the totality of being and the totality of nothingness both represent it equally well. This is why in the history of man the struggle with Nature signifies a dialectical stage very superior to the struggle with God. Without modernizing his thought in any way, we can say that Sade in his century was one of the first to affirm the idea of transcendence in the idea of the world because, as the idea of nothingness is part of the world, one cannot think of the nothingness of the world except within a totality which is always the world. If crime is Nature's true spirit there can be no crime against Nature and so it follows that there is no possible crime. Sade affirms this, sometimes with the greatest satisfaction, sometimes with the

wildest rage, for if he denies the possibility of crime, he is able to deny morality, God and all human values; but if he denies crime he must also reject the spirit of negation and admit that this can destroy itself. And this conclusion he cannot accept and so, gradually, he is led to deny that Nature has any reality. In the last volumes of *La Nouvelle Justine* (particularly in volumes VIII and IX) Juliette denounces all her former ideas and makes up for them in these terms: 'Idiot that I was, before we left one another I was still at the stage of nature and the new systems that I have adopted since then have led me away from her.' 'Nature,' she says, 'has no more truth, reality or meaning than God. You old bitch, Nature, you may be deceiving me as I was formerly deceived by the hideous image of God to which they said you were subordinated. We no more depend on you than on Him.' The cause is not necessary for the effect. So Nature must go, even though the philosopher was so pleased with her and it would have been so agreeable to him to turn universal life into a fearful machine of death. But simple nothingness is not his aim. What he sought is sovereignty achieved through the spirit of negation pushed to its furthest extreme. In turn, he has made use of men, God and Nature and each of these ideas when seen in the light of negation seemed to gain a certain value. But if one looks at the whole of experience, these moments no longer have the slightest reality because it is of the nature of experience to ruin them and make them cancel each other out. What are men if they are nothingness before God; what is God compared with Nature and what is Nature if she can be compelled to vanish before man who carries in himself the need to outrage her? And here the cycle is complete. We set out with man and we have now come back to man, only he now has a new name; he is called the Unique Person, the only one of his species.

When Sade discovered that in man negation is power, he tried to base man's whole future on negation pushed to its limit. To reach this point he borrowed a term from the vocabulary of his age—a principle whose very ambiguity shows an ingenuity of choice. This is the principle of energy. Now energy is a completely equivocal idea: it is at one and the same time a reserve and an expenditure of force. Affirmation which fulfils itself only by negation, power which is destruction: it is fact and law, datum and value. It is striking that in this forceful and passionate cosmos

Far from giving desire the highest position, Sade subordinates it and treats it as suspect. This is because desire militates against solitude and leads to the dangerous recognition of the world of other people. But when Saint-Fond declares, 'My passions concentrated on a single point are like the rays of the sun collected by a magnifying glass—they immediately consume their object', we can easily see how destruction becomes a synonym for power, though the object destroyed acquires not the slightest value from the operation. There is another advantage of this principle in that it assigns a future to man without imposing on him any recognition of a transcendent object. This is one of Sade's achievements. He claimed to have overthrown the ethic of the Good but, in spite of several provocative assertions, he took great care not to replace it by a gospel of Evil. When he writes, 'Everything is good when it is in excess', he can be reproached for the uncertainty of his principle, but he cannot be accused of a desire to base the sovereignty of man on the sovereignty of ideas superior to man. No privileged way of behaviour emerges from that statement. We can choose to do anything whatsoever. What matters is that when we do it we are able to affect a coincidence between maximum destruction and maximum assertion. In fact, in Sade's novels, it is precisely in this way that the plot works out. It is not by measure of their greater or less virtue or vice that the characters are unhappy or happy, but according to the energy they show. For, as he puts it, happiness is an affair of energy of principle and there can be none of it for the person who is always undecided. Juliette, when Saint-Fond suggests a plan for destroying two-thirds of France by famine, hesitates and is frightened: immediately she is threatened—why? Because she has shown weakness; her tone of spirit has lowered and Saint-Fond's greater energy is getting ready to make her its prey. That is even clearer in the case of the Durand, a poisoner and incapable of the slightest virtue. Her corruption is complete, but one day the Government of Venice asks her to spread the plague. This proposal frightens her, not because it is immoral, but because she fears the dangers that she herself might undergo, and so she is immediately condemned. Her energy had failed, she had met her master and her master was Death. In living dangerously, said Sade, all that matters is never to lack the force to go beyond the ultimate limits. One way of putting it is that this strange world of his is

not composed of individuals, but of systems of force, of higher or lower tensions. Where the tension is lessened catastrophe becomes inevitable. Moreover, no distinction can be made between Nature's energy and man's: Lust is a thunderbolt, just as a thunderbolt is Nature's lust: the weak will be victims of both and the strong will emerge triumphant. Justine and not Juliette is struck by lightning, and yet there is nothing providential in this conclusion. Justine's weakness attracts the thunderbolt that Juliette's energy repels. In the same way all that befalls Justine makes her unhappy because everything that affects her diminishes her: we are told that her inclinations were *virtuous but low*, and this must be understood literally. All that befalls Juliette, on the other hand, reveals her power to herself and she enjoys it as an increase of herself. That is why, should she die, she would experience the total destruction of death as the total expenditure of her enormous energy and this would raise her to the very pinnacle of power and exaltation.

Sade has understood perfectly that the sovereignty of the man of energy as arrived at by his identification with the spirit of negation is a condition of paradox. The complete man who completely asserts himself is also completely destroyed. He is the man of all passions, incapable of feeling. He began by destroying himself, first as man, then as God and then as Nature, and in this way he has become unique. Now he can do everything because in him negation has mastered everything. To explain his formation Sade has recourse to a very strange idea to which he gives the classical name of apathy. Apathy is the spirit of negation as applied to a man who has chosen to be sovereign. It is in some way the cause and principle of energy. Sade appears to argue more or less as follows: The individual today represents a certain amount of force: most of the time he disperses his strength for the benefit of those ghosts called other people, God or the ideal; by this expenditure he wrongly exhausts and wastes his potentialities, but what is worse, he is basing his conduct on weakness, for if he expends himself for others it is because he believes that he needs their support. This is a fatal lapse. He weakens himself by vain expenditure of energy and he expends his energy because he thinks he is weak. The strong man knows that he is alone and accepts that condition: he repudiates the whole inheritance of seventeen centuries of cowardice that would make him turn to

thers. Pity, gratitude, and love are all feelings he destroys, and in destroying them he recuperates all the force he would have expended on those debilitating impulses and, more important, he derives the beginning of a real energy from this work of destruction.

It must be understood, then, that apathy doesn't simply consist in destroying the 'parasitical' feelings, but that it also militates against spontaneity in any passion whatsoever. The perverted man who surrenders himself immediately to his vice is only a failure who will be lost. Even profligates of genius, with all the necessary gifts for becoming monsters, are doomed to catastrophe if they are merely content to follow their inclinations. Sade insists that for passion to become energy it has to be compressed, it must control itself in its course and pass through a necessary moment of insensitiveness: then only will it reach its maximum. In the early period of her career Juliette is repeatedly taken up on this point by Clairwill: she only commits crime in moments of enthusiasm when her passions are inflamed, and she puts lust and the ebullience of pleasure above all else. This is easy and dangerous. Crime means more than mere lust. Cold-blooded crime is greater than crime committed with feeling, but crime committed when insensitivity has hardened is more important than any other, because it is the act of a soul which has accumulated enormous energy in itself through destroying everything in itself and this energy will be completely at one with the impulse to total destruction for which it is preparing the way. All great debauchees who live for pleasure alone are great because they have utterly destroyed all capacity for pleasure in themselves.

It is clear that principles play a great part in this cosmos. The debauchee is 'thoughtful, concentrated in himself and incapable of being moved by anything whatsoever'. He is a solitary, unable to endure noise or laughter: nothing should distract him, 'apathy, indifference, stoicism and inner solitude are the pitch to which he must lift his soul'. A transformation of this kind and a work of self-destruction is not accomplished without extreme difficulty. *Juliette* is a kind of *Bildungsroman*, an apprentices' handbook in which we trace the slow education of an energetic soul. In appearances alone Juliette is entirely depraved from the very beginning. But in reality she has no more than a few inclinations and her mind is untouched: a gigantic effort still needs to be made

for, as Balzac says: 'You aren't destroyed by wanting'. Sade points out that in the achievement of this apathy there are dangerous moments. It can happen for instance that insensitivity reduces the profligate to such a state of exhaustion that he may easily return to morality. He believes he is hardened, but he is merely weak and a ready prey for remorse: a single impulse to virtue by re-establishing the universe of mankind and of God is enough to undo him. But if, on the other hand, in this state of prostration, when he experiences no more than a tasteless repulsion for the worst excesses, he could summon up a final increase of energy by inventing new excesses which revolt him still more, then he will emerge from prostration to all power, from coldness to the greatest pleasure and will enjoy himself in supreme and limitless measure.

One of the surprising things about Sade and his destiny is that though outrage has no better symbol than he, the outrageous side of his thought should have been for so long unknown. It is not necessary to summarize all the themes he discovered and which the boldest minds of the future will need all their courage to reaffirm. We have merely touched on them and have restricted ourselves to retracing the essential movement of his thought. We could well have dwelt on his conception of dreams where he sees the mind re-becoming instinct and escaping from the morality of daylight, or on those reflections in which he forestalls Freud, such as: 'It is in our mother's womb that the organs that make us capable of this or that eccentricity were formed: the first object seen and the first words heard are enough to determine the course we take: education is all very well, but it changes nothing.' In Sade there is a moralist of the great tradition and it would be easy to collect a selection of maxims compared with which Le Rochefoucauld would seem weak and unsure. He has been reproached for writing badly and it is true that he often writes with a haste and prolixity that try one's patience. But he is also capable of a strange humour: his style achieves an icy conviviality, a cold innocence in its excesses that one might well prefer to all Voltaire's irony—it is a quality found in no other French writer. All these gifts are remarkable, but they were useless, for until Apollinaire, Maurice Heine, and André Breton (with his clairvoyante sense of history's hidden resources) opened the way for Sade—and even until the publication of the latest studies by Jean Paulhan, Georges

Bataille and Pierre Klossowsky, Sade, the master of the great themes of modern thought and feeling, was no more than a name. Why is that? Is it because his thought is an achievement of insanity and was moulded by a depravity which the world hunted? Moreover, Sade put forward his work as the theory of this depravity; it is a tracing of it and claims to transpose the most repulsive anomaly into a complete view of the world. For the first time philosophy was publicly conceived as the product of an illness and shamelessly claimed that a system whose only guarantee lies in the preference of a perverted individual can be logical and universal thought.

Here again we come on one of Sade's remarkable originalities. He can be said to have carried out his own psycho-analysis by writing a text in which he sets down everything that has a bearing on his obsessions and in which he tries to find to what world and to what logic his obsessions are the key. But on the other hand, and here he was a pioneer, he boastfully proved that out of a certain personal and even monstrous conduct a world view could be drawn, sufficiently important to force great minds exclusively devoted to the search for the meaning of human existence, to do no more than reaffirm its main perspectives and lend their support to its validity. Sade was bold enough to state that when he fearlessly accepted his strange tastes and took them as the point of departure and principle of all thinking, he gave philosophy the solidest possible foundation and was thus able to interpret human destiny as a whole. Such a claim is no longer likely to frighten us, but let us frankly recognize that we are only just beginning to take it seriously and for long it alienated from Sade's thought even those interested in Sade the man. In the first place, what was he? A monstrous exception, absolutely outside humanity. As Nodier said, 'the singularity of Sade was that he committed an offence so appalling that it could not be named without danger'. (In a way this was certainly one of Sade's ambitions: to be innocent by dint of guilt and by his abuses to break for ever the norm or law that could have judged him.) When, later on, he was seen as the example of an anomaly shared by others, there was haste to shut him up in the nameless aberration to which only his name could be applied. Even later, when the anomaly was seen as an achievement of Sade's, when he came to be considered as a man sufficiently free to have discovered a new kind of knowledge and, in

any case, a man exceptional as much for his destiny as for his preoccupations; and when at last people saw in sadism a possibility involving the whole of humanity, even then Sade's own thought continued to be neglected, as if it was established that there was more originality and truth in sadism than in the way in which Sade himself interpreted it. Now, when we look closer, we see that his thought is by no means negligible and through the contradictions which throttle it, it brings us on the problem whose name he illustrates a more significant viewpoint than any which the most trained and enlightened thinking has hitherto allowed us to conceive. This is not to say that his thought is true. But it shows us that as between normal man within whom the sadist is imprisoned as in an impasse, and the sadist who treats this impasse as a way out, it is the latter who in the long run is more aware of the truth and logic of his situation and has the deeper understanding of it, to the point of being able to help normal man to understand himself by helping him to modify the conditions of all understanding.

[Translated by BERNARD WALL]

SELECTED NOTICE

The Naked and the Dead. By Norman Mailer. Allan Wingate, 15s.

I wish I had read the American reviews of *The Naked and the Dead*. I would like to know how so devastating a picture of the G.I. and his way of life was received in its homeland. Here, in England, I thought it was under-praised—rare fate for any novel in these days of preternaturally dim fiction. The reviewers did their duty, of course. They rallied round when the aged editor of the *Sunday Times* blew his top about all the fugging and tried to get it banned, but I think they hedged too much.

Obscenity is almost never boring, but that is not the point about *The Naked and the Dead*. Its author was writing as honestly as he could about soldiers at war; he had to include a lot of fugging because that is how soldiers talk and think. It may be that he erred in making his G.I.s quite so uniformly sour; it is difficult to be certain about this unless one knows America very well; if he did, it was probably due to his sharp reaction as a sensitive and very young man to the unexpected coarseness of army life. He would have been much less truthful had he gone to the other extreme and made them all sweet and smiling. His remains by far the best and most scrupulously honest novel of World War II yet published, but the qualities that make it so good, and which, I think, have been underestimated, belong to the artistic rather than to the documentary or socially significant department. It is alive from start to finish, well told and beautifully constructed. Seldom do you find a novel of this length—over 700 pages—which is so neatly yet naturally woven together. It is composed of three main elements: the overall military operation, the capture of a Pacific Island from the Japanese,

which comprises the mountain reconnaissance that takes up the second half; the characters and backgrounds of the men of the reconnaissance platoon; and the relationship between the General commanding the entire operation and his young A.D.C., Robert Hearn, the doomed, mildly left-wing, hero who is promoted to leading the platoon. The story-telling is so skilful that you need never lose your way. It narrows from the general to the particular, works up to its climax and fades away with a little dying fall that is perfectly in proportion. And all the time it closely follows the course of the fighting as the story of a good war novel should. The writing, except for the biographical passages where it is intentionally emotive and sometimes rather too much so, is not particularly distinguished yet remarkable for its precision; it strikes you as the work of an extremely intelligent observer rather than of a tough participator.

You get to know the characters in the platoon from the early stages of digging in and beating off counter-attacks, and by the time they set out on the fatal reconnaissance you have been given a detailed case history of most of them. Even when they are behaving at their nastiest, which is very nasty indeed, winking screaming Japs out of fox-holes, wrenching gold teeth from corpses, shooting wounded, and being bloody and mean to each other, you are made to feel a natural unforced compassion for them. Their backgrounds are presented in a series of biographical flashbacks inserted at intervals throughout the story. They are composed of extracts from each character's stream of consciousness flowing at full flood as if it were trying to drown somebody, and peeps through the author's God's-eye view, in about equal proportions. They provide some of the worst and also some of the best writing in the book. Several of the men, all of whom are sharply distinct while acting and talking, tend to merge here into a shapeless case-history of sexual maladjustment, at times reminiscent of the Kinsey Report. The moral here seems to be that American sexual intercourse is as tasteless and unsatisfying as American food—a proposition which I should have thought was supported by enough evidence. The biographies of the untough characters are more natural to read. Hearn, especially, the only character for whom the author has sympathy as distinct from compassion, gives me the impression that he has grown out of his past, in contrast to some of the toughs who make me feel that their pasts have been hitched on to their backs like packs.

General Cummings, the young middle-aged military bitch, whose homosexual tantrums are such a trial to poor Hearn, is another fascinating personage, though whether he is fascinating as a living character or as a political exercise is open to question. Mr. Mailer has portrayed him almost, if not quite, along the party line, as a big-shot American imperialist-fascist planner, one of the paranoiacs of the Pentagon, who sees the war merely as a 'process of power-concentration', a free-for-all in which the ring is being cleared for the last and final Armageddon. Throughout, Mr. Mailer sounds an implicit warning against the danger of an American form of Fascism; this, incidentally, only makes it all the more piquant—if that is the word—that the *Daily Worker* should have condemned his book as a piece of decadent muck-raking. The last word, however, is with sex rather than the class struggle. Like all really deep and solid novels, *The Naked and the Dead* seems even better on a second reading. Once again I put it down thinking what an almost phenomenal accomplishment it represented for a young man of twenty-four.

MAURICE RICHARDSON

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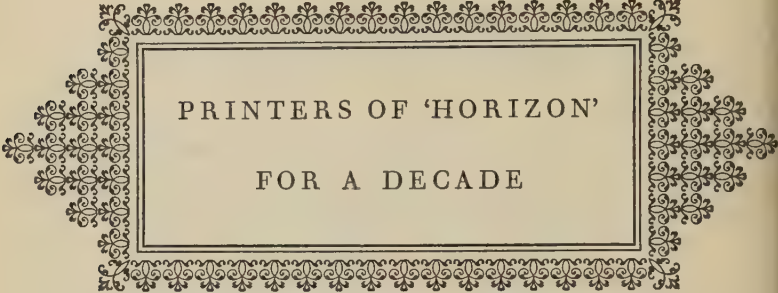
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